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GOETHE'S  
IPHIGENIE AUF  
TAURIS

An Interpretation and Critical Analysis

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To  
MY PUPILS  
*past and present*  
*I dedicate this work*

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## P R E F A C E

IT is fitting that I should dedicate this work to my pupils, for the first stimulus to write it came from them. Their queries revealed to me that there are many passages in Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* that are still obscure, and that the varied solutions suggested by commentators for several of the major problems of the play cause not a little confusion in their minds. In this interpretation I have tried to meet their difficulties. My aim has been to elucidate *the meaning of Iphigenie* 'aus sich heraus'. All else, such as a comparison of the four versions of the text (which has been adequately done already), has been avoided. I have made reference to Goethe's 'Weltanschauung' and to his other works only in passing. Nor should my work be regarded as a piece of 'Quellenforschung', in spite of the fact that I give quite a number of quotations from Goethe's chief Greek sources;<sup>1</sup> for, to be complete, such a work would have to show their exact relationship and would also entail comparisons with other Greek, to say nothing of French and German, dramas with kindred subjects.<sup>2</sup> Here again my sole aim has been to throw light on the meaning of the text. When Goethe introduced changes in the subject-matter—naturally the dissimilarities are generally the most illuminating—I have suggested possible reasons; and though these are often surmise, as the scholar will at once perceive, they will, I believe, help to reveal Goethe's intentions.

But what were Goethe's intentions? It is certain he never intended his play to mean so much, or, more correctly, so many different things, as the critics have discovered in it. This complexity of opinion may be highly disconcerting, especially to the younger undergraduate who is here perhaps making his first serious contact with German criticism.<sup>3</sup> I have therefore thought it advisable to quote at length from other interpreta-

<sup>1</sup> Quotations from the Greek are from the following translations:

Aeschylus, Lewis Campbell, Methuen, 1893.

Sophocles, R. C. Jebb, Camb. Univ. Press, 1888.

Euripides' *Iphigenia Dramas*, C. B. Bonner, Watts, London, 1930 (with minor alterations).

Euripides' *Orestes*, E. P. Coleridge, Bell, London, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> In a recent book, *Goethe and the Greeks* (Cambridge, 1941), Humphry Trevelyan gives a brief, but excellent, survey of Goethe's Greek sources for *Iphigenia*, in which he deals at some length with the Greeks' treatment of some of the problems inherent in the fable, and compares their ethical outlook with that of Goethe. Cf. especially pp. 96 ff.

<sup>3</sup> At Oxford (and, I believe, at some other universities, too) *Iphigenia* comes among the first Goethe texts on the undergraduate's reading list.

tions—some because their views on a particular passage or problem agree with my own and sum up the meaning succinctly, others because they offer readings with which I do not agree, but which it may be to the student's advantage to know. In the latter cases I generally give reasons for my disagreement or rejection. But there is one point I should like to stress; my remarks are not made in any spirit of carping criticism; they are intended to enlighten the student regarding the various interpretations, to help him to clarify in his own mind the points at issue, and above all to avoid as far as possible his becoming enmeshed in a maze of conflicting opinion. Here again I have had to limit the number of quotations; for a complete survey of the *Iphigenie* criticism would suffice for a work in itself. I have therefore confined myself chiefly to the works of H. Düntzer,<sup>1</sup> W. Bittmann,<sup>2</sup> Kuno Fischer<sup>3</sup>, G. Schlosser,<sup>4</sup> C. Steinweg,<sup>5</sup> Ch. Schrempf,<sup>6</sup> and J. G. Robertson.<sup>7</sup> Collectively they set forth most of the views of importance contained in the criticism as a whole, and deal fairly exhaustively, though not without contradiction, with the question of meaning.

I have deliberately chosen to give my interpretation by the simple method of following the story itself, favoured by Düntzer, Bittmann and others (though for Bittmann's interpretation I have no high regard), rather than by the method adopted by Steinweg more recently in his excellent work. The obvious advantage of the latter method is that it enables the writer to give a complete survey and exposition of problems which may, and often do, extend over different parts of the play. But it does not conveniently lend itself to the treatment of minor difficulties, which, though minor, cannot be adequately dealt with in the confined space of an annotated edition of the text. Moreover, the student does not think in problems: he approaches the play as a story; he views it as a series of Acts and Scenes; and his difficulties arise as the problems evolve from his reading of the text. Thus I have preferred to deal with the problems, or their parts, as they present themselves, giving my own interpretation in the body of my work, and quotations from other commentaries, together with their discussion, in the Notes. There are a few exceptions to this rule. Such major problems

<sup>1</sup> *Iphigenie auf Tauris, erläutert*, Wartigs Verlag (Hoppe), Leipzig, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> *Eine Studie über Goethes 'Iphigenie auf Tauris'*, Carl Graeser, Vienna, 1896.

<sup>3</sup> *Goethes Iphigenie, Festvortrag*, Carl Winter, Heidelberg.

<sup>4</sup> *Goethes 'Iphigenie' nach ihrem religiös-sittlichen Gehalt*, Frankfurt, 1875.

<sup>5</sup> *Goethes Seelendramen und ihre französischen Vorlagen*, Max Niemeyer, Halle,

1912.

<sup>6</sup> *Goethes Lebensanschauung in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Fr. Frommann, Stuttgart, 1932.

<sup>7</sup> *The Life and Work of Goethe*, Routledge, London, 1932.

as Orest's healing in Act III and Iphigenie's prayer in Act IV require detailed treatment; and I am of opinion that a discussion, which includes an examination of the opposing views of several commentators, will at once emphasize their complex nature and provide the serious student with the lead he requires. In dealing with those two problems in particular, I have paid special attention to Robertson's *Life and Work of Goethe*, not merely because his is the only English interpretation which probes beneath the surface, but also because it is one which is diametrically opposed to my own. Moreover, his views are in line with an important trend of German thought which cannot be ignored. Such a study of conflicting interpretations is, in my opinion, well calculated to stimulate the student in the exercise of his own critical faculties, both in his reading of this play and when he turns to other texts. And this, after all, is one of the chief objects of all literary study: *to make a critic of the student*.

It may perhaps be felt that my interpretation is an apologia for Goethe's play; for when critics find inconsistencies in the characters or serious flaws in certain incidents, I generally challenge them. The reason is that I have come to regard *Iphigenie* as organically well-nigh perfect. Not only has Goethe shown himself to be a superb dramatic architect (as opposed to a playwright whose first consideration is histrionic effect), but, by a wise selection of incidents and *motifs* from a vast literary field and a careful elimination of all redundant themes, he has evolved a plot and created anew characters that are entirely free from major contradictions or inconsistencies. And this, I believe, was his aim. If, then, we possess different interpretations of a particular verse or incident, all good or attractive, of which one fits into the plot as a whole, while the others are contradictory, I invariably accept the former as the right one, as the one Goethe intended us to take. While I hope I may not be found guilty of forcing a meaning on a part for the sake of the whole, I believe that the true meaning of a part can only be deduced, when it is considered within the framework of the whole.

There are, I admit, minor flaws in the play. Most of them are inherent in the fable and could not have been avoided except by the admittance of others of a more serious nature; a few Goethe tolerated—one or two are of his own making—with a definite purpose, and the reader may decide for himself whether they are justified or not. More serious are the paradoxes in the ethics of the play, due in some measure to the mixture of ancient and modern ideas and to the fact that Goethe chose as his representative and exponent of eighteenth century humanitarian-

ism and idealism a Greek priestess who still clung to some of her old Tantalid beliefs. It may be argued that Goethe's choice was at fault, that a high-souled woman imbued with the spirit and outlook of his own age would have portrayed his idealized conception of St. Agatha more satisfactorily. But this criticism reveals a misconception of Goethe's real aim. Moreover, it is not uncommon for a work which delves into the mystery of man's moral and spiritual processes to speak in paradoxes, or, as Goethe said of *Faust*, to raise more questions than it answers. *Iphigenie*, which deals primarily with the relationship of man and the Godhead, would hardly ring true if it were entirely consistent or pretended to solve the insoluble. When the riddle of the universal divine order proves too much for Iphigenie's human understanding, she falls back on her simple, but implicit, faith in the goodness of her Gods. And here speaks one of the greatest religious minds that Europe has ever known. Such questions come within the scope of the meaning of the play and are discussed. But I have made no attempt to deal fully with more general themes, such as the affinity of Goethe's play with the Greek or the modern spirit, for such discussions avail us little in our particular task. We can hardly come beyond Goethe's own dictum in the matter, namely, that his play was "verteufelt human", which is little more than a statement of the common denominator. Another of his remarks:

Alle menschliche Gebrechen  
Sühnet reine Menschlichkeit,

which has been much abused, again stresses only one side of *Iphigenie*—almost the converse of Burns': 'Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn.' Iphigenie's pure humanity proves to be a blessing to her race, and qualifies her to serve as the instrument of the Gods for the conferment of gifts they wish to bestow. Yet there is nothing cold or austere about her humanity, in spite of the popular attitude to the work. The word 'Seele' may, as is claimed, be the one that recurs most frequently in the text; nevertheless, it is on the word 'Herz' that Iphigenie places special emphasis. Feeling, in her view, is a better and surer guide for man's behaviour than law or intellect, and the pure heart is man's true interpreter of the will of the Gods. The Priestess of Diana, like Faust, believes that 'Gefühl ist alles', and becomes an advocate of inspired, rather than of revealed, religion. If we must look for an 'Idee' in *Iphigenie*, I think it is that.

Let us not imagine, however, that Goethe had any 'Idee' in mind. He approached his subject, not as a pure thinker or

moralist, but as a poet; and his first aim was the creation of a work of art. All else was by the way, and any messages it may have for us grew spontaneously out of his material and the artistic shape he gave it. The result is a great poem, in dramatic form, touching upon eternal questions and truths which have ever busied, and which perhaps will continue for all time to busy, men's minds. It is as such that I have sought to interpret it, as a fine, coherent tale exquisitely told, as a work of art which is at once sublime and profound.

I must record my indebtedness to Mr. A. S. L. Farquharson, Fellow of University College, who has read my manuscript and with whom I have discussed at length both Goethe's play and the fable. His interpretation of Iphigenie's prayer in Act IV, Scene v, will, I hope, solve a problem which so far has seemed to defy a wholly satisfactory solution. I am also grateful to Professor H. G. Fiedler, Professor A. Ewert, and Mr. T. E. Wright, Fellow of The Queen's College, for useful hints and advice. Above all my thanks are due to my wife for her invaluable help. Mr. Basil Blackwell's enterprise in issuing, at a time like the present, an Interpretation of a work whose chief import is faith, hope, and idealism, hardly requires comment.

JAMES BOYD.

*Oxford, June, 1942.*

Since this work went to press, we mourn the death of A. S. L. Farquharson, a fine scholar, a true friend, and a great man. He cannot see his contribution in proof, but I have reason to believe that he would not have made any far-reaching changes either in the manner in which I have set forth his views or in their substance. In a letter dated 27 October, 1941, he wrote: 'I think that what you have said about my contribution is all that I can desire'; and on another occasion: 'You have put my meaning very clearly'. We lack his final approval, but since I entirely agree with what he advocates, I am prepared to take the responsibility.

J. B.

*August, 1942.*

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## INTRODUCTION

**F**ATE has often been regarded as the basis of Greek tragedy. It was a power, mysterious and inscrutable, which stood above the Gods and to which the Gods themselves were subject. Indirectly, therefore, it also ruled the destinies of men, and the characters of the great Greek dramas came under its sway. Though seemingly arbitrary in its working, Fate was not entirely divorced from Justice, though the conception of justice may have changed from age to age and from poet to poet. Goethe took over this conception of Fate. But instead of visualizing it as a power above the Gods, he conceived it as the God's own Law, to which obedience was due. For Herodotus Fate was unrelenting; he seems to have believed in a kind of Divine Providence working out a purpose of general good; but he stresses the idea of Nemesis and his pessimism springs from a sense of the impotence and limitation of men—the innocent suffer with the guilty. Goethe goes further and accuses the celestial beings of allowing their creature to become involved in guilt and then leaving him to his inevitable punishment:

Ihr führt ins Leben uns hinein,  
Ihr laßt den Armen schuldig werden,  
Dann überlaßt ihr ihn der Pein:  
Denn alle Schuld rächt sich auf Erden.

The conception is an elemental truth. But it did not satisfy the great Greek dramatists. It excludes the influence of human behaviour and the force of human volition. They recognized conduct as a real power and man's humility and obedience as a means of appeasement. This conception, too, was taken over by Goethe, who sought to harmonize the two antagonisms of unrelenting justice and appeasement. With the idea that man cannot escape evil with its consequent punishment, he linked up the thought that man is master of his destiny. But there is ever the corollary that his mastery only exists within the limits set by the Gods; its extent must conform with their intention and their universal order. These Gods are benevolent beings; but, bound as they are by their own eternal and inflexible Law, or Necessity, their benevolence is restricted by man's conduct.



Thus, man can further or impede the will of the Gods, and in meting out to him the reward or punishment he deserves, they have no choice but to obey their Law.

Sin, then, brings retribution. Here Goethe and the Greeks think alike. But there is a difference in their conception of Sin. The greatest of all sins, that of offending the Gods, which brought down on the unhappy victim immediate and arbitrary punishment, finds no place in our mode of thought to-day, except perhaps that its magnitude and inflexible punishment are echoed in the sin against the Holy Ghost in the Christian religion. Nor do we stress the importance of the ancient law which preserved the sacredness of the family and even required vengeance for its violation. In the modern world the blood-feud has been obviated by the action of the State, which, as a purely objective power, dispenses justice which is at once punitive and corrective. For a modern poet to treat an ancient theme, the very basis of which is vengeance, was no easy task. The family feud was an indispensable part of the subject, in which Orestes' matricide was a sacred duty and an inevitable fulfilment of the law. Homer did his best to avoid the latter point. His is the story of a terrible feud in which Orestes slays Aegisthus, his father's murderer, but though he may possibly have slain his mother also, we are not definitely told so. The conjecture is left open that she may have died by her own hand.<sup>1</sup> Sophocles found a more clearly defined fable. Though he had no choice but to accept the matricide as an integral part of the story, his device was to represent it as something good and laudable. The later poet Euripides recoiled. They were no good Gods, according to him, when they enjoined Orestes to murder his mother, but demons of an old superstition, as Gilbert Murray puts it, 'driving man towards a mis-called duty, the horror of which, when done, will upset his reason.' The earlier writer, Aeschylus took a more realistic view: for him the deed was a filial duty and defensible in so far as it was commanded by a God. Nevertheless, it was a sin, one which should never have been committed. This view, though illogical, was the one which best suited Goethe's purpose. For both poets life was sacred, and both, though reluctant to admit that the Gods could prescribe a sin, stressed its inevitability. Both were conscious of the clash between the dramatic necessity implied in the subject and the law of humanity. For Goethe the clash was further aggravated by the development of an outlook which had evolved in the course of two thousand years. Punitive measures by the individual were now no less condemnable than the original crime they were

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jebb's edition of Sophocles' *Electra*, p. 11.

intended to avenge, and there was no old custom or belief whose memory was still sufficiently vivid to mitigate the seriousness of the crime of vengeance. A modern reader refuses to regard an avenger as acting at the behest of divine beings or of any law, human or divine.

The change in the conception of atonement added further to Goethe's difficulties. The Greek dramatists were indifferent as to the manner in which the Gods were appeased. Euripides allows his characters to rob the Scythians of the image without qualms of conscience, and their deception of the simple-minded and trusting barbarian King Thoas appeared as justifiable to them as it was no doubt delightful and amusing to a Greek audience. And Euripides' Gods are satisfied. For Goethe sin does not stop at bloodshed; deceit is deceit, even when practised on a stranger. The absence of a sense of gratitude and the act of inflicting pain on others are hardly less grievous. The lack of humanity is itself a sin. To incorporate such ideals of human conduct in a theme which demands the inclusion of a matricide as a sacred duty was no easy matter, and the difficulty was not minimized by the fact that the two extreme conceptions of human behaviour were to be concentrated in one character, the heroine. Goethe was further faced with the change in the modern conception of absolution. In Aeschylus, Euripides and Goethe (though not in Sophocles) the crime is perpetrated with reluctance and abhorrence and the matricide is pursued by the Furies. But the Greek Orestes is less concerned with atoning for his crime and paying the penalty, than with coming to terms with justice and evading the Furies. In Euripides' *Orestes* he even begs Menelaus to help him to escape from Argos and appeals to the citizens to spare his life. For Goethe's Orest conscience, in the form of the Furies, is not so easily stilled; he can never come to look upon matricide as justifiable; he makes no defence; and his only hope is that he may atone for his crime by death and so win through to peace.

Since Goethe does not accept Euripides' view-point that it is immaterial how absolution is obtained, he lays greater stress on the idea of repentance. This is most obvious in Orest; but his Iphigenie, too, refuses to believe that the end justifies the means, and recoils from the means, even when dictated by a divine oracle, if this conflicts with her ideal of human conduct. Here Goethe comes into line with Sophocles, whose Antigone is prepared to risk all, rather than disobey the higher law within her. The difference between *Antigone* and *Iphigenie* is that the former deals with the question of the limit of the state's authority over the individual conscience, the latter with the limit to which

the individual conscience is subject to the apparent dictates of the Godhead. Each heroine must make a choice, each must break one of two laws, and both elect to obey their conscience. But while in *Antigone* the two alternatives are irreconcilable and the heroine dies, in *Iphigenie* there is no such irreconcilability, for there can be no clash between the dictates of good Gods, when rightly understood, and the promptings of a pure heart. The clash in *Antigone* is real, in *Iphigenie* it is not. Tragedy can be, and in Goethe's play is, averted by the human determination to do what is right and by the recognition of truth in good time. The essence of Goethe's problem is, therefore, the tragedy, and to some extent also the blessing, of man's limited capacity for perceiving truth.

There is further a striking similarity in the characters of the heroines. Antigone and Iphigenie represent the loftiest ideals of womanhood in the literatures of the ancient and modern worlds. This does not mean that they are the only great or noble women. Such abound in Euripides. His Macaria resigns her life to save her race; his Iphigenia goes willingly to the altar at Aulis to further the Trojan expedition; his Alcestis makes the supreme sacrifice to save the life of her husband. But in each case a divine voice has expressed the demand and has promised a definite reward; and in each case the step is facilitated by encouragement or pressure from those around. Antigone, on the other hand, has to act in spite of the protests of her sister, in defiance of the precepts of worldly wisdom; and the action itself is its only reward. Goethe's Iphigenie, too, not only finds a deterrent in Pylades, the exponent of worldly wisdom, she must even act in opposition to what she believes is the command of the Gods themselves, while her action, far from promising a sure reward, threatens to destroy her ultimate mission and involve her friends and herself in tragedy. The two women are alike in that they determine to act according to their lights. Further, they are both brave, loving, tender-hearted, steadfast in their sense of right and duty, true to the bonds of friendship and family, and struggle to believe in goodness even when the Gods appear to discountenance it.

The method by which Goethe welded this heterogeneous material together is as simple as it is ingenious. He chose as his scene of action the holy grove of the temple of Diana at Tauris, and the outlines of Euripides' second *Iphigenia* drama served at once as a basis for his plot and as a framework into which the ideas and episodes from other Greek dramas could be woven. Five characters were sufficient for his purpose. Iphigenie is the central figure and preeminently important (according to

Steinweg her role consists of 981 lines out of a total of 2174).<sup>1</sup> She stands between Thoas, her best friend, and Orest, her brother, and is assailed by her two advisers, Arkas and Pylades. Arkas—an invention of Goethe's—stands relatively to Thoas as Pylades does to Orest, and each pair, Scythian and Greek, forms a united front at once against Iphigenie and against each other. The force and influence of each side is perfectly balanced and the symmetry exact.

The arrangement of the roles of the characters within the structure of the play is equally simple and symmetrical. In Act I Iphigenie holds the stage; in Act II it is Pylades; in Act III Orest; in Act IV Iphigenie; and in Act V each of the characters plays a part, while Thoas holds the stage throughout. This allocation of Acts to characters enabled Goethe to introduce the varied themes in a well-ordered and natural manner. In Act I, while his own plot unfolds itself, his Iphigenie relates her previous history—the subject-matter of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*—together with an account of the Tantalus curse. Act II reproduces part of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, though the order of events is reversed: since the two Greeks must appear together and give a reason for their presence in Tauris, we are told, in Scene I, of Orest's despair and his appeal to Apollo after his crime—it is the end of the *Choëphoroe* and the beginning of the *Eumenides*—while in Scene II Pylades recounts the *Agamemnon* tragedy. Act III continues the *Oresteia* from this point: Orest himself tells of the murder of Klytämestra and Ägisth—the main theme of the *Choëphoroe*. Act IV, which deals with Iphigenie's conflict, echoes Sophocles' *Antigone*. Though the situations differ and the *Antigone* theme finds no place in the fable, we have in both heroines the same underlying faith in the Gods, the same desire to do what is right despite all opposition, and the same despair when the Gods seem to forsake them. They are both victorious: Antigone's victory spells death by immurement; Iphigenie's victory enables her to meet the King with a new determination, prepared, if need be, to accept her doom. In Act V we return to Euripides. The Greeks depart, not by stealth and by means of a *deus ex machina*, but in consequence of a successful appeal to Thoas and a timely recognition of the real intentions of the Gods.

This brief survey may serve to illustrate the simplicity of the play's construction, its unity and balance, and the fine absorption and coordination of the varied subjects. Yet the mass of material never disturbs the smooth continuity of the argument. The issue is well defined in the first Act, it permeates each suc-

<sup>1</sup> Goethe's *Seelendramen und ihre französischen Vorlagen*, p. 4. .

cessive incident, and it is finely resolved in the heroine's return home. Each episode promises to be a step in the gradual progression to that end and at the same time threatens to thwart it. There is thus a rise of dramatic force, a *crescendo* in the inexorable march of events, and a consequent intensification of interest. When the climax is reached, it is found to be worthy and satisfying. Our survey also illustrates an essential difference between Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*—indeed all Greek drama—and Goethe's play. Greek drama is episodic in character, Goethe's is comprehensive. While the Greeks concentrate on one section of the fable only (stating briefly the necessary preliminary facts) and end with its catastrophe, Goethe covers the whole fable, in so far as it affects his ultimate *dénouement*. He chose the final stage for his play, not only because it was of greatest importance and deserved to be treated in greater detail, but also because it alone could serve as his canvas for the whole. It is not only a drama on the theme which its title specifies, but also a long heroic history which embraces a series of catastrophes, each brought into its just relationship with, and given the emphasis demanded by the exigencies of, the main plot. This is not drama as the Greeks knew it, or even as the English conceive it. It has points in common with the epic, though naturally chronological order in the episodes has had to give way to dramatic necessity, and the story unfolds itself indirectly through the characters of the play. All this accounts to some extent for the relative ineffectiveness and lack of popular appeal of Goethe's work on the stage. It is a poem to be read and re-read, rather than to be heard from the stage; and though the theatre may reveal more fully its noble pathos and tragic grandiloquence, its perfection of form and sublime poetic dignity can be fully appreciated only by the thoughtful and sensitive reader.

There is another quality in Goethe's play which bars its way to popularity on the stage. It has a psychological and spiritual import unknown to Greek drama. While Euripides' only concern was the ultimate return of the image and the three Greeks, Goethe's subject is man's struggle for the retention of his faith, his attainment to a purity of heart which will succour him in his struggle, and, finally, the recognition of truth through obedience to the dictates of conscience. Fuller knowledge at once strengthens and justifies man's faith in the goodness of his Gods and in the wisdom of the universal order. The main action of Euripides, therefore, sinks into a place of minor importance in Goethe's play: instead of the image, it is Iphigenie who returns to Greece, with the 'Bild', her ideal conception of the Gods, in her soul. Thus the climax is reached, not by an outer physical

action, but by a spiritual victory. Through her victory the Gods are able to reverse their own decree, the curse is terminated, and she can leave Tauris, with her brother restored to sanity and inspired with new zest for life—an outer action which is a visible symbol of the expiation of the curse.

The new psychological and spiritual content given to the *Iphigenie* theme was not the contribution of Goethe alone. Though it has always been a German characteristic to probe into the depths of motive and emotion, the psychological trend was general in Europe in Goethe's age. As J. G. Robertson<sup>1</sup> points out, other poets had already 'rehabilitated Iphigenie in accordance with Christian ethical tenets'. Perhaps Goethe knew the *Iphigénie en Tauride* by Claude Guimond de la Touche, 'the virtual creator of the "humane" heroine with whom a modern audience can whole-heartedly sympathize'. It is hardly likely that he knew Gluck's opera on the same subject, the libretto of which has a strong affinity with the French play; for its first performance took place in Paris in 1779 (the year in which Goethe's *Iphigenie* was first performed at Weimar) and it was not published till 1786.<sup>2</sup> De la Touche's drama, on the other hand, was performed in 1757, and was accorded a reception unknown on the Paris stage since the days of Voltaire's *Zaire* and *Mérope*.<sup>3</sup> Here Iphigénie is the noble home-sick exile with the 'grand cœur', who recoils from human sacrifice and is pressed by Eumène to renew it with fresh vigour. But the effect is diminished by the fact that the priestess has sullied her soul with the sacrifice for twelve years and the reason for her new abhorrence is not sufficiently motivated. Nor is there the complication of Thoas' proposal of marriage, which threatens to anchor her in the barbarian land for all time, though this *motif* is to be found in another French play, Joseph de Chancel de la Grange's *Orest et Pylade, ou Iphigénie en Tauride*, a work which in certain respects was the forerunner of J. E. Schlegel's *Die Geschwister in Taurien* (1737), better known under the title of its revised version, *Orest und Pylades* (1739). Common to both de la Touche's and Goethe's plays is the gentle influence of the heroine in soothing her afflicted brother (we have a distant parallel in Euripides' *Orestes*, in which Electra performs the same kindly office). In both *Orest* relates the history of his crime, his healing forms the axis of the play and the departure of the Greeks is secured by the personality and nobility of the heroine.

<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Work of Goethe*, pp. 116-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Iphigénie en Tauride, Tragédie lyrique en quatre actes par M. Guillard, mise en musique et dédiée à la Reine par M. le Chevalier Gluck*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Düntzer's *Erläuterungen* of Goethe's *Iphigenie*, p. 11.

But the sympathy which Goethe awakens for the unhappy fate of Thoas is absent in the French work, and the climax, of which the earlier Acts hold out so much promise, is cold and disappointing.

Since the ground was so thoroughly covered, we may well ask: what was Goethe's aim in attempting a new dramatization? and what was his contribution? It may, I think, be summed up by saying that he had a new approach to, and an original conception of, the subject and art generally. While the Greeks were concerned with the dramatization of a national fable for their festivals and Goethe's immediate predecessors aimed at modernizing an ancient theme, he saw in it situations and problems that reflected some of his own experiences, emotions and mental processes. Goethe was not the poet to write a work objectively for its own sake without inner and external stimulus. Though we must not stress unduly his remark that all his works were 'Gelegenheitsgedichte' or fragments of a great confession, nevertheless even such works as *Iphigenie* and *Tasso*, the most objective of all his plays, have a background of experience. True objectivity, of course, he only attained in Italy. It was there, as he wrote to the Duke, that he acquired 'a pellucid classic style' and found himself 'as an artist'. Henceforth he was able to look on life and treat even his own experiences and emotions in an objective way; and this for him was true artistry. Everything became projected, as it were, on a distant canvas. All this, however, could only affect the final version of *Iphigenie*, which he wrote in Italy. It explains the cold, distant classicism, which has sometimes acted as a deterrent to its full enjoyment, though it also explains its perfection of style. But in its essentials the story remained unchanged throughout its four phases. It was written down in 1779, like so many of Goethe's great works, in a fever of inspiration, in a few weeks amidst trying distractions. But the very speed with which it was written proves that Goethe had come to terms with his subject and with himself. He had long felt himself an Orest; he had suffered the pursuit of the Furies after his shameful desertion of Friederike Brion; and the fact that, in his panegyric on Shakespeare, he could visualize himself as playing 'die Nebenrolle eines Pylades, wenn du (Shakespeare) Orest wärest, lieber als die geehrwürdigste Person eines Oberpriesters im Tempel zu Delphos', may indicate that the theme was even then haunting his mind. Had a drama been written then, it would probably have been an *Orestes* or *Orest und Pylades*. But his first few years in Weimar changed alike its value and his attitude. The heroine came into focus.

Before leaving Frankfurt Goethe remarked on being shown a

silhouette of Frau von Stein: 'It would be wonderful to see the world reflected in her soul.' The remark proved to be prophetic. For the next ten years Charlotte von Stein became the principal medium whereby he interpreted the ethical values of life. Their friendship became a kind of spiritualized passion, through which the nobility and influence of woman was glorified. She taught him the lesson of self-restraint: the mere act of loving—without possessing—was sufficient in itself and was able to satisfy the higher human aspirations. Thus the soul-sister, Frau von Stein, who became the model for the priestess-sister, Iphigenie, at once changed his approach to his subject and enlarged its conception. The idealized relationship with Charlotte did not satisfy Goethe for long; but it was real enough while it lasted. By 1779 it had become sufficiently crystallized and clarified in his mind to take shape as a work of art, and in playing the role of Orest at the first performance Goethe did more than play a part: he presented a phase of his life through which he had passed, but which was still alive and intense. The role is the objectivized form of the poem, *An Charlotte von Stein* (1776), in which the following significant lines occur:

Ach, du warst in abgelebten Zeiten  
 Meine Schwester oder meine Frau.  
 Kanntest jeden Zug in meinem Wesen,  
 Spähtest, wie die reinste Nerve klingt,  
 Konntest mich mit Einem Blicke lesen,  
 Den so schwer ein sterblich Aug' durchdringt;  
 Tropfstest Mäßigung dem heißen Blute,  
 Richtetest den wilden, irren Lauf,  
 Und in deinen Engelsarmen ruhte  
 Die zerstörte Brust sich wieder auf.

We must, however, beware of overestimating the influence of age or circumstance. They affect the externals rather than the essentials. The work is the product of genius, and genius, changing little from age to age, creates mysteriously. Goethe's genius was no doubt more complex than that of Sophocles, as Sophocles' was more complex than that of Aeschylus, but fundamentally Goethe was a spiritual descendant of the Greeks. He thought and felt as they did. He had the breadth of vision of a Sophocles,

Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole.

Yet he had the restless spirit of a Euripides and could penetrate to a great truth with a single flash of inspiration. He had the realism and dramatic force of an Aeschylus or Sophocles, yet he outstripped Euripides in contemplative and introspective



powers. He wrote, as he once remarked to Eckermann, not for the crowd, but for the thoughtful, and it is just this quality that gives his genius more general affinity with that of Euripides. Both were essentially idealists.<sup>1</sup> Both extol true friendship and the power of love. Both advocate freedom, but it is inner freedom, freedom of soul, that they value most highly. Slaves may be free and high-born may be slaves, Euripides maintains, and Goethe insists that true freedom is freedom from moral servility and from a guilty conscience. It is the inner life of man, not outer circumstance, that gives happiness, beauty and poise. Both poets pay homage to idealism as a guide to human conduct, the 'Shrine of Right' that lives within us. Both admire self-restraint, especially in women, and regard death as preferable to meanness and shame. The same moral values apply to all men. Andromache declares:

In foreign land, as here, shame is shame (*Androm.*, 244);

and Goethe's barbarians outshine the Greeks in many moral virtues.

Above all both poets are convinced of the goodness of the Gods. Euripides' Iphigenia remarks:

No deity, I hold, can e'er be vile (*Iph. Taur.*, 391).

They are not the jealous Gods of old; their envy, as it appears in some Greek authors, has been replaced by the passions of men. Aeschylus, like Herodotus, found those wise who walk humbly and bow to the inexorable decrees of Fate; for Euripides and Goethe there was no such inexorable Fate. The mind of man has become a God; as Euripides puts it:

The mind that is within us is our God (*Frag.*, 1018),

and again:

Zeus, whether Nature's Law or Mind of Man (*Troades*, 886).

Thus human nature, or man's mind, is closely akin to God, but Goethe makes the proviso that it must be *pure*. Hence man cannot escape a share of responsibility for the evil in the world. Human ills are chiefly of his making. But even then the Gods have pity. In *Electra* the Dioscuri declare:

For we and all the dwellers in Heaven  
Feel pity for the toils of men (1329-30).

Even the Erinyes are not malevolent beings, but powers which

<sup>1</sup> I am here much indebted to R. B. Appellton's *Euripides the Idealist*, Dent, London, 1927.

work for the higher good of humanity. In Goethe's *Iphigenie*, too, the visitations of the Gods prove to be ultimate blessings.

Concerning the life beyond the grave both poets are somewhat vague. Certainly Euripides refused to regard it as a life whose object was to compensate men for disadvantages and injustices suffered on earth; and Goethe, too, makes no suggestion of its being more than an existence advancing upon the present one. For both it was a state of peace, a refuge from earthly toils. Euripides may possibly have held the belief, widespread in his day, in a future cycle of existences, though this seems to be refuted in a passage in the *Heracles* (655-72); according to a remark to Eckermann Goethe inclined in later life to the view that fate owed him a new sphere of activity, after he had taken full advantage of the present, but he had not come so far when he wrote *Iphigenie*. It would seem that they both felt we simply could not *know*; as Euripides puts it:

That there exists another life more dear than this  
We cannot know. Gloom circles round, all edged with cloud;  
While we forlornly cling to this, the Life that is;  
What glistens here on earth we do proclaim alone.  
No other life we know from birth,  
We have not seen beneath the earth (*Hipp.* 191-7).

Whatever it may be, it is a gift of the Gods, and cannot but be good:

Who knows if this be Life, which men call death,  
And dying living? Our knowledge shows us that  
The living suffer, while those who are no more  
Do not fare ill, nor suffer ought amiss (*Frag.* 833).

But its form and character are indistinct. The vision of Goethe's Orest of the underworld echoes Euripides' brief description:

No life  
Lies with the dead; but consciousness is theirs  
For ever. Eternal Ether wraps them round (*Helena* 1014-6).

Finally, both poets regard knowledge, or wisdom, as good in itself. Socrates, of whom Euripides was a disciple, taught that Virtue was Knowledge and that no man was willingly bad, once he understood the real nature of good and evil. Goethe goes further in regarding virtue as a means to the attainment of higher and fuller knowledge. But whether man acts with good or evil intent, i.e., out of wisdom or ignorance, the consequences are inexorable:

This is the good of all—  
Of single men and of communities,  
That wicked suffer, and the good fare well (*Hec.* 902-4).

And man's guide is in himself:

Good sense, with prudence, is the prophet true (*Helena*, 757);  
though in Goethe the emphasis is placed on goodness and purity  
of heart. This thought, too, we find in Euripides:

The chaste at heart will never come to grief (*Orestes*, 318).  
It is prudent to be good, and goodness is the highest wisdom.

## ACT I, SCENE I: IPHIGENIE

ACT I, in which Iphigenie holds the stage throughout, gives the exposition of that section of the plot which we may regard as the *Iphigenie* material proper. It consists of four scenes: i, a monologue, in which the first *motif*, Iphigenie's nostalgia, is introduced; ii, a dialogue between Iphigenie and Arkas, which describes her circumstances in the barbarian land of Tauris; iii, a dialogue in which Iphigenie narrates the history of her family, and Thoas, on having his offer of marriage rejected, decides upon the resuscitation of the ancient rite of human sacrifice; iv, a monologue, which reveals Iphigenie's reactions to these changed circumstances and introduces the second *motif*, namely, her determination to remain unsullied with the guilt of shedding human blood.

Goethe, like Euripides, opens his play with a monologue by the heroine; but, unlike Euripides, he confines himself to one point, namely, her intense longing for home. In Euripides' play *Iphigenia* at once gives her family history, so far as it is known to her, and tells of the barbaric custom of sacrificing all strangers who are thrown upon the inhospitable shores of the Tauric Chersonese. Goethe reserves both of these points for later Scenes, while *Iphigenia's* dream, in which Orestes' name is first mentioned, he ignores altogether. Introduced at the outset, alone and with due emphasis, and finally resolved with Thoas' 'Lebt wohl' in Act V, the nostalgia *motif* serves as the thread which binds Goethe's play. Nevertheless, Iphigenie's return to Greece is not Goethe's real subject: it is only a part of the outer action which serves as a symbol of the fulfilment of the more important psychological or spiritual action. From the outset Iphigenie is convinced in her own mind that she must first return to Greece, before the curse can be expiated. She has no clear idea how the one is to effect the other: she only feels that without her return there can be no expiation. Her nostalgia, therefore, does not spring from her present unhappiness alone; it is bound up with her hope of becoming the means of expiation and of thus proving to be a blessing to her family. It is this hope that inspires her words in the opening monologue and impels her actions throughout the play.

Iphigenie, emerging from the temple of Diana, enters the holy grove, which remains the scene of action for the rest of the play. She does so, she states, with a feeling of awe, as if it were the first time; her spirit refuses to adapt itself to this strange environ-

ment, in spite of the many years spent in the seclusion of the temple, to which the high will of Diana had consecrated her:

Heraus in eure Schatten, rege Wipfel  
Des alten, heil'gen, dichtbelaubten Haines,  
Wie in der Göttin stilles Heiligtum  
Tret' ich noch jetzt mit schauerndem Gefühl,  
Als wenn ich sie zum erstenmal beträte,  
Und es gewöhnt sich nicht mein Geist hierher.  
So manches Jahr bewahrt mich hier verborgen  
Ein hoher Wille, dem ich mich ergebe;  
Doch immer bin ich, wie im ersten, fremd (1-9).

Exactly how long Iphigenie has been in Tauris, we are not told; nor is there any definite indication of her age. Her calm restraint would suggest a woman at least approaching middle age. Goethe does not introduce into his play Euripides' theme of a prospective marriage with Achilles, by which Iphigenia and her mother, Clytemnestra, were lured to Aulis; but her memories of Greece and her single reference to Achilles and other heroes who set out for Troy (l. 864), show her to have been at least adolescent, when she was offered as a sacrifice on the altar. We may, in fact, assume that Goethe's Iphigenie, too, was of marriageable age at the time. Since then Troy has fallen, Orest has grown from childhood into manhood, the murders of Agamemnon and Klytämnestra have been perpetrated, after which we must suppose an interval of time, during which Orest, in his unhappy state, sought relief from Apollo at Delphi and found his way to Tauris. According to Aeschylus Agamemnon's grave was denied libations till Clytemnestra's dream of Orestes' return, a period of eight years, which, together with the ten years of the siege of Troy, give us a total of at least eighteen. Yet Iphigenie refers to this long period by the non-committal: 'so manches Jahr'. Goethe's reason, we must assume, was the justifiable one of seeking the greater dramatic effect which is to be obtained by a comparatively young, rather than a middle-aged, heroine.

A second question prompted by these opening lines is: What is Iphigenie's attitude to her unwelcome restraint? Does she harbour feelings of revolt or ingratitude towards a Goddess who saved her from certain death? I think not. They are nothing more than a statement that her nostalgia is so overwhelming that any land other than Greece would ever remain foreign to her.<sup>1</sup> As she had been saved by Diana, so she attributes her exile to the will of Diana, and she therefore submits. When, however, her release at last seems imminent (III, i), she is quick to admit the wisdom of the Gods in withholding from man what



been able to give Diana the willing service she craved to render. But the Gods prove to be satisfied with this reluctant service—indeed, it is perhaps more acceptable to them than that which is performed with the knowledge of a sure reward. For the present, however, Iphigenie has not reached such clarity; she only knows that she has no quarrel with the Gods, whatever their intentions may be. Yet her words are addressed in the first instance to herself: they are a kind of injunction that, no matter how inexplicable the ways of the Gods may be, it is not for her to question their wisdom or authority. The reiteration of this idea of submission indicates a determination on her part to keep it ever before her; and submission, as we shall see, is one of the virtues which distinguish her from her Tantalid forbears.

Iphigenie next contrasts the unhappy lot of woman with that of man, blessed with possessions, crowned with victory in battle, and able to fend for himself in a strange land. One cannot but feel that it is one of the giant race of Tantalus who speaks here—'des größten Königes verstoßne Tochter', as she calls herself—who in her heart longs for a life of action. Doubly unhappy is woman, she insists, when an unkind fate casts her on a distant shore, and this fate is hers:

So hält mich Thoas hier, ein edler Mann,  
In ernsten, heil'gen Sklavenbanden fest (33-4).

Her reference to Thoas, the barbarian king, as a noble man, at once reveals her high regard for him and her appreciation of the kind treatment she had received at his hands. The thought leads her back to the relationship ever uppermost in her mind, that with Diana. There then follows a confession of shame that her gratitude to her Goddess, in whom she still sets all her hopes, has not been sufficient to quell all other emotions:

O wie beschämt gesteh' ich, daß ich dir  
Mit stillem Widerwillen diene, Göttin,  
Dir meiner Retterin! Mein Leben sollte  
Zu freiem Dienste dir gewidmet sein.  
Auch hab' ich stets auf dich gehofft und hoffe  
Noch jetzt auf dich, Diane, die du mich,  
Des größten Königes verstoßne Tochter,  
In deinen heil'gen, sanften Arm genommen (35-42).

Diana, she believes, had only wished to frighten her father, when she demanded, as it seemed, his daughter as a sacrifice on the altar. If, therefore, Agamemnon has returned victorious from Troy's overthrown walls, if his wife<sup>4</sup> and children still live, then she prays that they may yet all be happily reunited:

So gieb auch mich den Meinen endlich wieder  
 Und rette mich, die du vom Tod errettet,  
 Auch von dem Leben hier, dem zweiten Tode ! (51-3).<sup>5</sup>

This prayer is the point of the monologue, as it is also its climax. Iphigenie does not base her appeal on any virtue of her own, but, strangely enough, on one of Agamemnon's, who, in offering his daughter as a sacrifice, had been obedient to the Gods' commands: he had set greater store on possessing their favour than on retaining 'sein Liebstes'. Since she believes that it was never Diana's intention to demand her life—she states later: 'Sie wollte nicht mein Blut' (l. 427)—she pleads for her release with some confidence. This prayer, like all Iphigenie's appeals, is answered; indeed, it is significant that each in its turn—her present prayer; her prayer at the end of Act I to be spared the necessity of shedding human blood; that in Act III, Scene iii, for her brother's healing; that in Act IV, Scene v, to have her ideal conception of the Gods preserved—sets forth some subsequent action. If we believe that the Gods will answer, as Goethe obviously assumes we shall, then we know in advance what the ultimate *dénouement* of the particular theme will be.<sup>6</sup> It is also significant that, though all her prayers are inextricably bound up with her desire to see the curse expiated, nowhere does she ask the Gods to terminate it. Such an appeal would be tantamount to requesting them to reverse their own decrees. A reversal could only come from the Gods themselves, and then some other contribution than prayer, some active co-operation, would be required of Iphigenie. It is not for us to ask why the Gods should desire such activity on the part of men or in what way they utilize it in the execution of their plans; nor does Goethe attempt an answer. All that can be said is that Iphigenie believes that the Gods will eventually decide to terminate the curse, that they will then require some human agency, and that she has been ordained by them to be that agency. Her prayers are nothing more than appeals for the conferment of favours or retention of virtues which will fit her for her task. But in no single prayer does she refer directly to the curse. If we must look for a prayer which sets forth a supernatural or spiritual process like expiation, we shall find it, not in her words, but in her emotions and her life.



## ACT I, SCENE II: IPHIGENIE, ARKAS

SCENE ii, which falls into two distinct sections, serves two purposes: (a) it explains fully, and gives the reasons for, those feelings of 'Sehnsucht', 'Gram', 'Widerwille' and 'Einsamkeit', of which Iphigenie speaks in her first monologue; and (b) it introduces the themes which are to be dealt with in Scene iii, namely, Thoas' chagrin at Iphigenie's reticence regarding her earlier life and his determination to marry her. The first section looks back—it is virtually a continuation of Scene i in dialogue form—the second looks forward and introduces a situation which threatens to undo all Iphigenie's hopes of a return to Greece; for a marriage with Thoas would of necessity bind her to Tauris for all time. Iphigenie is placed in a dilemma by Arkas' demands; the 'Zwiespalt' in her soul is the clash between what she knows to be right and what she ardently desires: it is the beginning of that conflict within her which finds its climax in the end of Act IV. This conflict is symbolized in her two advisers, Arkas and Pylades. The former, in trying to obtain from her 'ein gutes Wort' for Thoas and later in seeking to restrain her from a course of lying and deception, speaks to her conscience: the latter, in holding out the possibility of a fulfilment of all her hopes by her obedience to the oracle of Apollo, speaks to her heart—and each, in advising what is obviously to his own interest, believes he is advocating what will prove to be for her own good.<sup>7</sup> But it is Iphigenie's misfortune to be misunderstood by both her friends. The misunderstanding is inevitable so long as they are ignorant of the great ambition which impels all her actions; for Iphigenie, no doubt because she herself has no very clear ideas as to the manner in which her mission shall be accomplished, gives them no indication even of its existence. Hence, Arkas believes he has some justification in suspecting her of ingratitude in withholding her confidence from Thoas and of a lack of wisdom in being reluctant to enter into a highly desirable marriage. Pylades, on his part, feels equally justified in blaming her because of her apparent unwillingness to sully her soul even to the extent of a lie, which, by facilitating the fulfilment of Apollo's oracle, would save Orest and secure a safe return for them all. Scene ii unfolds the situation which gives rise to the first of these misunderstandings, and so introduces the first stages of Iphigenie's conflict.

Arkas, in announcing the return of the King and his army from recent victory, offers Diana's priestess 'Gruß und Heil'. Iphigenie's reply is significant:

Unsre Göttin sieht willkommenem Opfer  
 Von Thoas' Hand mit Gnadenblick entgegen (61-2).

It is significant because it at once reveals Iphigenie's ceaseless efforts to direct the 'Opfer' of the barbarian Scythians into humane channels. Since her arrival in Tauris the rite of human sacrifice had been suspended, though it had never been definitely abolished, and her words are a reminder—we can well imagine that it was by no means the first—that the offering of thanksgiving should be one that is pleasing to Diana. No other than that of gratitude—certainly not that which is dictated by Scythian laws and customs—will receive the 'Gnadenblick' of the Goddess.

Arkas avoids this point and comes at once to his mission:

                                  Noch bedeckt  
 Der Gram geheimnisvoll dein Innerstes;  
 Vergebens harren wir schon jahrelang  
 Auf ein vertraulich Wort aus deiner Brust.

Und wie mit Eisenbanden bleibt die Seele  
 Ins Innerste des Busens dir geschmiedet (66-73).

Iphigenie recognizes the justice of the accusation; in her first monologue she spoke of the 'Gram' which 'zehrt das nächste Glück von den Lippen weg' (l. 17); and the 'Eisenbanden', which envelope the 'Seele', are a corollary of the 'Sklavenbanden', which bind her to Tauris (l. 34). Her defence is that her behaviour befits an exile:

Wie's der Vertriebnen, der Verwaisten ziemt (74).

The wise, though unimaginative, Arkas, who is evidently unable to understand why a feeling of exile should engender reticence, inquires:

Scheinst du dir hier vertrieben und verwaist? (75).

Iphigenie answers with another question:

Kann uns zum Vaterland die Fremde werden? (76).

Arkas, who has spent all his life in his native environment, is unable to understand such thoughts. Surely, he feels, after so many years in Tauris, 'viel geehrt' and 'viel geliebt', she should be able to accept it as her 'Vaterland'; Greece, on the other hand, has become foreign to her:

Und dir ist fremd das Vaterland geworden (77).

Quite unwittingly Arkas puts his finger on an open wound. One of the chief causes of her loneliness is that, while she had never been able to accept, or be fully accepted by, the Taurians—she was for them the mysterious, god-given priestess—she had



when, brought to the temple by a mysterious fate, Thoas had received her, as a 'Gottgegebne, mit Ehrfurcht und mit Neigung' (ll. 99-100). He reminds her further that she had only narrowly escaped death on the altar in Tauris:

Und dieses Ufer ward dir hold und freundlich,  
Das jedem Fremden sonst voll Grausens war,  
Weil niemand unser Reich vor dir betrat,  
Der an Dianens heil'gen Stufen nicht  
Nach altem Brauch ein blutig Opfer fiel (101-5).

It is obvious that Arkas, her friend and counsellor, seeks for arguments which will at once create in her a more contented frame of mind and a friendlier attitude towards Thoas; for had not the King, in obeying the obvious will of Diana, infringed the ancient laws of the land? Had Arkas known more of her history, he might have contrasted Thoas' benevolence with the action of her own father, who had acquiesced in her death. But Iphigenie is unmoved. The gift of life is not enough; she has other tasks than those of priestess to perform, of which Arkas has no notion; her present life is thus to her mind a useless one:

Frei atmen macht das Leben nicht allein.

Ein unnütz Leben ist ein früher Tod;  
Dies Frauenschicksal ist vor allen meins (106-16).

In the Scene, so far a continuation in dialogue form of Scene i, the only points of importance which have been added are Iphigenie's statement that she regards her exile as an outcome of the curse and the information which Arkas gives concerning her hospitable reception in Tauris. The following section is explanatory and preparatory. We are first given a full statement regarding the new religious forms, which Iphigenie has introduced. We are informed that strangers cast upon the inhospitable shores are now spared:<sup>8</sup> what Diana had done for her, Iphigenie has been able to do for others. Even more, they were granted a safe return home—a fate, we can well imagine, Iphigenie often envied them. Far from being displeased with the denial of human sacrifice, Arkas states, Diana had answered Iphigenie's prayers—which, we are to understand, replaced human sacrifice—'in reichem Maß'. His admission is significant; for it coincides with a later statement of Iphigenie's, namely, that it is not in the nature of the Gods to demand, or even to desire, human blood—had they themselves not saved her from the altar?—and that they would, on the contrary, prefer to prolong man's brief span of life. To what extent this belief had penetrated among the Scythian people, we are told later

(ll. 1468-9); Arkas, for his part, has no doubts on the point:

Hat nicht Diane, statt erzürnt zu sein,  
Daß sie der blut'gen alten Opfer mangelt,  
Dein sanft Gebet in reichem Maß erhört? (128-30).

Besides, Arkas states, victory has been given to their army; everyone has experienced a better fate and a lighter yoke, since the King had come under her gentle influence; and to thousands she has been an new source of blessing and joy.

To this conversation Arkas gives a sudden turn by volunteering his advice:

Glaub' mir und hör' auf eines Mannes Wort,  
Der treu und redlich dir ergeben ist:  
Wenn heut der König mit dir redet, so  
Erleichter' ihm, was er dir zu sagen denkt (150-3).

Iphigenie's reply not only reveals her repugnance, it also shows that the question of a marriage is one of long standing:

Du ängstest mich mit jedem guten Worte;  
Oft wich ich seinem Antrag mühsam aus (154-5).

Apparently Thoas had never pressed the matter; but now a new factor has entered, and Arkas advises her to have a care. This new factor—one which is generally either minimized or entirely overlooked—consists of the changed conditions in the land since the death of Thoas' only son. The King is now determined, is indeed compelled, to carry out his resolve. Arkas describes these changed conditions:

Bedenke, was du tust und was dir nützt!  
Seitdem der König seinen Sohn verloren,  
Vertraut er wenigen der Seinen mehr,  
Und diesen wenigen nicht mehr wie sonst.  
Mißgünstig sieht er jedes Edeln Sohn  
Als seines Reiches Folger an, er fürchtet  
Ein einsam hülflos Alter, ja vielleicht  
Verwagnen Aufstand und frühzeit'gen Tod (156-63).

He ends his advice:

Erschwer's ihm nicht durch ein rückhaltend Weigern,  
Durch ein vorsätzlich Mißverstehen! Geh  
Gefällig ihm den halben Weg entgegen! (169-71).

In offering this advice, Arkas pleads both as a faithful servant of the King and as a true friend of Iphigenie. Not only would an ardent personal desire of the King's be fulfilled and peace be secured in the land, but also Iphigenie would be spared much suffering. As Thoas' confidential adviser—an adviser so trusted as to be given such a mission—Arkas was probably aware of the King's intention of reviving the old custom of human sacrifice, if Iphigenie should refuse; no doubt he also knew of

the arrival of the two strangers, who would at once provide the means for its immediate execution. With such knowledge, Arkas believes he has every reason for advising Iphigenie to have a care 'was du tust und was dir nützt': she can at once secure peace in the land, prevent the revival of the dreaded sacrifice, and provide a safe return to the strangers. No abhorrence of marriage, however intense, could justify a refusal. He is, however, unaware of an ambition within her which is sufficient to impel her to take any risk. It is natural, therefore, that he is baffled by her later behaviour, that he considers himself justified in their next dialogue (IV, ii) in reproaching her: 'Du hast nicht des Treuen Rat geachtet' (l. 1455), and appeals once more:

O, könnt' ich ihm noch eine Botschaft bringen,  
Die alles löste, was uns jetzt verwirrt ! (1453-4).

Now, as ever, Iphigenie turns a deaf ear:

Soll ich beschleunigen, was mich bedroht ? (172).

To Arkas, who naturally regards the offer of the hand of Thoas and a place by his side on the throne as one which is to be highly prized, Iphigenie's words are unintelligible:

Willst du sein Werben eine Drohung nennen ? (173).

Her reply already indicates the extent to which she is prepared to go in order to preserve her freedom:

Es ist die schrecklichste von allen mir (174).

To this remark, which is tantamount to a declaration that under no circumstances is she willing to capitulate, there is no reply: Arkas therefore turns to his other point—namely Iphigenie's secrecy regarding her descent, for which, he feels, she can have no valid excuse:

Gieb ihm für seine Neigung nur Vertraun ! (175).

Iphigenie's reply:

Wenn er von Furcht erst meine Seele löst (176),

only becomes fully intelligible, when we learn that she fears banishment from Tauris—a possible result of her confiding in Thoas—for banishment would be as fatal for her hopes of expiating the curse, as would a union binding her permanently to Tauris.

Arkas puts the direct question:

Warum verschweigst du deine Herkunft ihm ? (177).

Iphigenie's reply:

Weil einer Priesterin Geheimnis ziemt (178),

is, though true, to some extent evasive; for secrecy was both

politic and necessary, not on account of her being a priestess, but because she believed that she was destined, through this intermediate stage of priesthood, to carry out a great task. Arkas, however, ignorant of this undercurrent of thought, states the position as he, the King's adviser, sees it:

Dem König sollte nichts Geheimnis sein !  
Und ob er's gleich nicht fordert, fühlt er's doch  
Und fühlt es tief in seiner großen Seele,  
Daß du sorgfältig dich vor ihm verwahrst (179-82).

With the justice of this demand, Iphigenie in her heart agrees; to her inquiry whether Thoas entertains feelings of 'Verdruß und Unmut' towards her, Arkas replies that it would almost seem so. Certain remarks of the King's, he states, have shown 'daß seine Seele fest den Wunsch ergriffen hat, dich zu besitzen' (ll. 186-7); and he again appeals:

Laß,  
O überlaß ihn nicht sich selbst, damit  
In seinem Busen nicht der Unmut reife  
Und dir Entsetzen bringe, du zu spät  
An meinen treuen Rat mit Reue denkest ! (187-91).

Iphigenie, who is as yet ignorant of the King's resolve to revive the ancient custom of human sacrifice in the event of her refusing, sees in Arkas' warning a threat of violence; in such a contingency, she states, she will call to all the Gods for help, and especially to Diana, 'die ihren Schutz der Priesterin gewiß und Jungfrau einer Jungfrau gern gewährt' (ll 199-200). On this point Arkas is able to reassure her: it is no 'Jünglingstat' which the King premeditates, but it is nevertheless one which is to be feared:

Wie er sinnt,  
Befürcht' ich ändern harten Schluß von ihm,  
Den unaufhaltbar er vollenden wird (203-5).

He therefore appeals again: if, as she states, she refuses to entertain the thought of a marriage, at least she should confide in the King:

Drum bitt' ich dich, vertrau' ihm, sei ihm dankbar,  
Wenn du ihm weiter nichts gewähren kannst ! (207-8).

To Iphigenie's request that he should tell her more, he replies: 'Erfahr's von ihm' (210), and adds his final appeal for confidence and 'ein gutes Wort':

Du ehrst ihn, und dich heißt dein eigen Herz,  
Ihm freundlich und vertraulich zu begegnen.  
Ein edler Mann wird durch ein gutes Wort  
Der Frauen weit geführt (211-3).

The scene ends with a short monologue of six lines, in which Iphigenie sums up her position. She does not see, she states, how she can follow the advice of her faithful counsellor—for in becoming Thoas' wife she would be untrue to herself and to her great mission—but she will gladly give the King 'für seine Wohltat gutes Wort': she is, in other words, prepared to confide her secret, as a sign of her gratitude. We may assume that the thought, and also the hope, is not absent from her mind that, once the King is informed of her descent, he may be less anxious to make her his Queen.

### ACT I, SCENE III: IPHIGENIE, THOAS

SCENE iii raises two major problems: (a) What was Goethe's object in introducing the Tantalus legend—unquestionably an extraneous theme—into his play, and then at such length? Why should the King, after tolerating years of silence, now demand to be informed concerning Iphigenie's descent? and why should she, after having fearfully preserved her secret so long, suddenly decide to reveal it? Did she hope, by her narrative, to induce the King to think better of his proposal of marriage? If such was her object, she fails; then what dramatic necessity is served by its introduction? (b) How can we reconcile the King's act in resuscitating the ancient custom of human sacrifice with his 'noble' character and with his humane action towards the end of the play? Was it a mere exhibition of undignified rage, or of despotic revenge for thwarted desires? Did he hope to coerce Iphigenie into submission by a measure which he knew would be repulsive to her? Or were there motives and circumstances which give some justification to his action?

Scene iii presents the great struggle between Iphigenie and Thoas, the unhappy outcome of which, namely, the King's decision to revive the ancient rite of human sacrifice, forms the basis for the problem of the drama. At the outset Iphigenie knows the seriousness of the situation: Arkas had informed her that Thoas is determined to marry her and that he is pained by her long silence regarding her descent. We know her attitude: she is prepared to take the consequences, no matter what they may be. How terrible they are, she only realizes, when she learns (in Act III) that the first victims are to be her brother, Orest, and his friend, Pylades. But even then, it should be noted, there is not the slightest sign, either in her words or in her behaviour, that she regrets the decision she now makes.



Her present decision to evade any bonds which might interfere with her return to Greece and would thus frustrate her hope of expiating the curse on her family, is, from this point onwards, the guiding principle of all her actions.

Iphigenie's first speech immediately opens the conflict. It is more than a greeting; it is at once a prayer and an implied warning. 'May the goddess, Diana, bless you with royal gifts', she exclaims; 'may she grant you victory, glory, riches, and the well-being of your people.' We know, from Arkas' words, that all these things have already been granted. They were, moreover, blessings which had been obtained, not through the old barbarous practice of human sacrifice, but by the gentler methods of prayer; for, as Arkas remarked: 'Hat nicht Diane, statt erzürnt zu sein, daß sie der blut'gen alten Opfer mangelt, dein sanft Gebet in reichem Maß erhört?' (ll. 128-30). The hope, or prayer, which Iphigenie now utters in the presence of the King, that the bestowal of these blessings may continue, is a reminder that they are not necessarily permanent. They can, and may, be forfeited. The warning does not fall on deaf ears; for the King, too, realizes that these things have been granted in answer to Iphigenie's 'sanft Gebet'.

In his reply Thoas comes at once to the point. He has lost his only son, who has fallen by the enemy's sword; and he reminds Iphigenie of the sympathy she had shown him, a sympathy which, he admits later, he had misinterpreted:

Du nahmest teil an meinen tiefen Schmerzen,  
Als mir das Schwert der Feinde meinen Sohn,  
Den letzten, besten, von der Seite riß (231-3).

He had not felt his loneliness, while his soul was consumed by the desire for revenge; but now that his enemies are destroyed, there is nothing in his home to delight him. Besides, there are also national and political considerations which make a second marriage imperative; his people are becoming restive, and, as he states:

Ein jeder sinnt, was künftig werden wird,  
Und folgt dem Kinderlosen, weil er muß (242-3).

These, then, are the reasons, personal and political, which inspire his action; he ends with a direct request for Iphigenie's hand. Knowing, as we do, Iphigenie's decision to remain unfettered at all costs, her evasive answer to the King, whom she has no wish to offend, cannot surprise us:

Der Unbekannten bietest du zu viel,  
O König, an. Es steht die Flüchtige  
Beschämt vor dir, die nichts an diesem Ufer  
Als Schutz und Ruhe sucht, die du ihr gabst (251-4).<sup>9</sup>

Thoas accepts Iphigenie's words for what they are worth: they are, if not a blank refusal, sufficiently uncompromising to cause him to drop the matter for the moment. He turns to his second point, that of confidence, where he feels, she can have but a poor defence:

Daß du in das Geheimnis deiner Ankunft  
Vor mir wie vor dem Letzten stets dich hüllest,  
Wär' unter keinem Volke recht und gut (255-7).

He reminds her that these shores have always been inhospitable to strangers, for, as he states, 'das Gesetz gebietet's und die Not' (ll. 258-59). She alone had found them friendly, and he is disappointed in receiving no response:

Von dir hofft' ich Vertrauen, das der Wirt  
Für seine Treue wohl erwarten darf (263-4).

Not only is the reproach justified, Iphigenie feels that the confidence which the King demands is one which ought to have been freely offered long ago. Her defence is that her silence was inspired, not by 'Mißtrauen', but by 'Verlegenheit'. For her secret is a terrible one. If the King knew her descent, far from offering her a place by his side on the throne, he might be tempted to banish her from his kingdom, exposing her to that misery which is inevitably the fate of all exiles:

Verbarg ich meiner Eltern Namen und  
Mein Haus, o König, war's Verlegenheit,  
Nicht Mißtraun. Denn vielleicht, ach! wüßtest du,  
Wer vor dir steht, und welch verwünschtes Haupt  
Du nährst und schüttest, ein Entsetzen faßte  
Dein großes Herz mit seltnem Schauer an  
Und, statt die Seite deines Thrones mir  
Zu bieten, triebest du mich vor der Zeit  
Aus deinem Reiche, stießest mich vielleicht,  
Eh' zu den Meinen frohe Rückkehr mir  
Und meiner Wandrung Ende zgedacht ist,  
Dem Elend zu, das jeden Schweifenden,  
Von seinem Haus Vertriebnen überall  
Mit kalter, fremder Schreckenshand erwartet (265-78).

We quote this passage in full because it reveals Iphigenie's outlook in more ways than one, and explains the nature of her 'Verlegenheit'. While she wished to remain unfettered by any bonds, free to return to Greece if the opportunity should ever offer itself, to be driven from Tauris 'vor der Zeit', that is, before the Gods ordained, would be a calamity no less terrible: banishment and marriage alike would mean the destruction of all her hopes and the undoing of her mission.

The question now arises: Why, if Iphigenie had assiduously

avoided confiding her secret for so long, is she now willing to do so? The excuse that she regarded the King's demand as just, is not sufficient: it had always been just. The reason is to be found in the fact that their relationship has drastically changed. While she was his priestess and nothing more, she had nothing to gain, and possibly everything to lose, by her confidence. Now the King is demanding her hand in marriage, while she is equally determined to resist. She could not but know that a knowledge of her descent might possibly induce him to change his mind: he might be loath to link his fate with that of a descendant of the cursed house of Tantalus.<sup>10</sup> The situation was not without danger; for the risk of being banished from Tauris was ever present. But she looked to the Gods, she trusted in the nobility of Thoas—as she does again later in the play—and she hopes that her confession, instead of bringing evil, may possibly avert the more pressing danger which now threatens her. This, it seems to me, is Iphigenie's frame of mind, when she decides, not without temerity, to take the risk.<sup>11</sup>

But, it may be objected, does not this amount to an accusation against Iphigenie? Is such strategy consistent with her character? Has not Goethe foisted upon her some of the cunning of his Euripidean model? It is undoubtedly true that it would constitute a very serious blemish in her character, if there were no other explanation for her action than that of strategy. But there is another. The King demands two things of her: her hand in marriage and her confidence. She refuses the former, but gives the latter; and she does so, because she recognizes it to be her duty. So far he had made no direct request to be told, and she had not voluntarily sought to create a situation which might endanger her plan. If he had done so earlier, she would have had no choice but to comply. But she cannot, and will not, act in opposition to the dictates of her conscience—this is fully borne out by her action later in the play. She is now impelled by this same consideration. She must, by her very nature, do what is right, and it is right to give the King what she regards as his due.

The King's reply reveals that he is puzzled by much in Iphigenie's speech. What can her reference to herself as 'ein verwünschtes Haupt' mean? Why should she fear that her secret might cause 'ein Entsetzen' to grip his 'großes Herz mit seltnem Schauer'? Whatever may be the intentions of the Gods towards her and her house, he states, since she came among them at Tauris, there has been no lack of blessings. He obviously shares Iphigenie's belief that the Gods, who are good, reward only good; and since they have showered blessings upon him and his people

—which he ascribes to her presence and intercession—he cannot but believe that they mean well by her. In Tauris she has proved only a source of blessing:

Was auch der Rat der Götter mit dir sei,  
Und was sie deinem Haus und dir gedenken,  
So fehlt es doch, seitdem du bei uns wohnst  
Und eines frommen Gastes Recht genießest,  
An Segen nicht, der mir von oben kommt (279–83).

It should be noted, too, that Thoas' statement coincides with that of Arkas: the Gods, far from being offended, had answered her prayers 'in reichem Maß'. In the light of these statements, Thoas' later reversion to the old rite of human sacrifice becomes all the more difficult to understand. But for the present he merely states that it would be difficult to convince him that she is guilty:

Ich möchte schwer zu überreden sein,  
Daß ich an dir ein schuldvoll Haupt beschütze (284–5).

To Iphigenie's retort that it is the 'Wohltat' that brings the blessing, not the 'Gast'—the King's 'Wohltat' not only implied his hospitality, but also his consent to the introduction of more humane forms of worship—Thoas gives an answer which illuminates his whole conception of the Gods:

Was man Verruchten tut, wird nicht gesegnet (287).

The Gods, who are good and who reward good, cannot by their very nature reward evil—it is surely their office to punish it. But Thoas now goes further: even good rendered to wicked people, he believes, remains unblessed by the Gods. How then, since his 'Wohltat' to Iphigenie had been rewarded with their blessings, could she be evil? Since this was the case, what had she to fear? Thus he can with confidence urge her to end her 'Schweigen und Weigern'; and in doing so, he regards himself as 'kein ungerechter Mann' (288–9). He further assures her that, as she has been sent by Diana and is holy to her, so she is holy to him: the will of the Goddess shall ever be his law. He now gives her the solemn promise—one which is of the greatest importance for Iphigenie later—that if the opportunity for her return should ever arise, she shall be free to go; but, if on the other hand, the way is closed for ever, her race exiled or destroyed, then, he claims, she is his by more than one law. Thus he appeals:

Wenn du nach Hause Rückkehr hoffen kannst,  
So sprich' ich dich von aller Forderung los;  
Doch ist der Weg auf ewig dir versperrt,  
Und ist dein Stamm vertrieben oder durch  
Ein ungeheures Unheil ausgelöscht,

So bist du mein durch mehr als ein Gesetz.

Sprich offen! und du weißt, ich halte Wort (293-9).

Iphigenie has now no valid reason to delay further her confiding in Thoas; yet she finds it difficult to bring a secret, so long withheld, over her lips. But she looks to the Gods, in whose hands rest all good or evil consequences, as the case may be:

Einmal vertraut verläßt es ohne Rückkehr  
Des tiefen Herzens sichre Wohnung, schadet,  
Wie es die Götter wollen, oder nützt (303-5).<sup>12</sup>

There then follows the bald statement, pronounced with outward calm, but certainly not without fear of heart:

Vernimm: ich bin aus Tantalus' Geschlecht (306).

The King's amazement is apparent in his reply:

Du sprichst ein großes Wort gelassen aus.  
Nennst du den deinen Ahnherrn, den die Welt  
Als einen ehemals Hochbegnadigten  
Der Götter kennt? Ist's jener Tantalus,  
Den Jupiter zu Rat und Tafel zog,  
An dessen alterfahnen, vielen Sinn  
Verknüpfenden Gesprächen Götter selbst  
Wie an Orakelsprüchen, sich ergötzten? (307-14).

His lines also incidentally serve to inform us that the fame of Tantalus, if not news of his fall, has travelled to the distant shores of Tauris. The full story of its later implications so far as his descendants are concerned, has obviously not reached him, but he knows enough to realize the awful import of Iphigenie's words.<sup>13</sup>

Iphigenie's next speech, the last before she begins her long recital of the history of her family, reveals her attitude towards her great ancestor:

Er ist es; aber Götter sollten nicht  
Mit Menschen wie mit ihresgleichen wandeln;  
Das sterbliche Geschlecht ist viel zu schwach,  
In ungewohnter Höhe nicht zu schwindeln.  
Unedel war er nicht und kein Verräter;  
Allein zum Knecht zu groß, und zum Gesellen  
Des großen Donners nur ein Mensch. So war  
Auch sein Vergehen menschlich; ihr Gericht  
War streng, und Dichter singen: Übermut  
Und Untreu stürzten ihn von Jovis Tisch  
Zur Schmach des alten Tartarus hinab (315-25).

The question of Tantalus' crime raises a problem of some importance. What did Iphigenie know, or believe, concerning its real nature? Let us admit at once that her words are ambiguous. According to the legend, Tantalus had betrayed

the secrets of Zeus to men; yet Iphigenie insists that he was 'kein Verräter'. She informs Thoas that he was banished from the table of the Gods, but she is more concerned with his defence than with the reasons for his banishment. It is a point of some significance that in her long narrative of her family's crimes and atrocities, Iphigenie seeks to defend only two, namely, Tantalus and Agamemnon; and in each case her remarks concerning their short-comings are, no doubt intentionally, vague. While an unduly strong plea on behalf of Tantalus' innocence would necessarily have implied grave injustice on the part of the Gods in inflicting the curse—a sentiment which would sound strange from Iphigenie—nevertheless her words may be taken to mean that she regards him at any rate as entirely innocent of the charge usually brought against him: the version given by the poets—as poets they were quite within their rights—was therefore pure fiction. Hence his crime must have been, in her view, a lesser one: he had perhaps not borne the honour conferred on him with becoming restraint, a possibility which is suggested by her lines: 'Das sterbliche Geschlecht ist viel zu schwach in ungewohnter Höhe nicht zu schwindeln' (ll. 317–8). If this had actually been his crime, his excuse was that he was after all 'nur ein Mensch': for though he was a 'Titan', Goethe is careful not to mention that he was, as in the old legend, a son of Zeus. That Goethe had indeed some such minor offence in mind, is suggested by his own remarks on the subject in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book XV: 'In der Gesellschaft der Götter aufgenommen, mochten sie (Tantalus, Ixion and Sisyphus) sich nicht untergeordnet genug betragen, als übermütige Gäste ihres wirtlichen Gönners Zorn verdient und sich eine traurige Verbannung zugezogen haben. Ich bemitleidete sie, ihr Zustand war von den Alten schon als wahrhaft tragisch anerkannt, und wenn ich sie als Glieder einer ungeheuren Opposition im Hintergrund meiner *Iphigenie* zeigte, so bin ich ihnen wohl einen Teil der Wirkung schuldig, welche dieses Stück hervorzubringen das Glück hat' (W. Ed., I, 28, p. 314).<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand Iphigenie's words may be taken as a tacit admission that the charge of disloyalty preferred against Tantalus is justified, although the poets are wrong in ascribing to his actions motives of 'Übermut und Untreu'. She does not specifically deny that he betrayed the secrets of Zeus, but she does claim that he was not inspired by mean motives; rather his crime had been committed in a momentary lapse of human weakness—and human weakness does not necessarily imply a treasonable nature or baseness of character. It is possible—and I am inclined to the view—that Goethe never seriously

contemplated indicating any change in this section of the old legend.<sup>15</sup> What he admired in the Tantalus 'Gestalt', was 'der titanisch-gigantisch himmelstürmende Sinn', no matter whether he were guilty or not. Is it not possible that Goethe transferred some of this admiration to Iphigenie, and that her vague reference to the crime only reflects Goethe's own reluctance to frame in specific terms a charge of any kind against one of his 'saints'?<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the seriousness of the crime would be some justification for the terrible punishment which the Gods inflicted. For they had not only raised Tantalus to their table; they had also listened to his words as to 'Orakelsprüche'. They had thus made him to all intents and purposes their companion and equal—he had become 'one of them'—and his punishment was commensurate with his crime: their verdict was the verdict of Gods against a God who has fallen from grace, namely, eternal damnation. There was, then, good reason for their 'strenges Urteil', of which Iphigenie speaks; and though she laments its severity, she nowhere gives any hint that she regards it as unjust.

Nevertheless, there is an inconsistency in Iphigenie's words. The Gods were no doubt within their rights in punishing Tantalus, but the wisdom of having raised him in the first instance may rightly be questioned. As omniscient Gods they must surely have known in advance that he, a mere mortal, would fall short; for, as stated above, he is no longer a son of Zeus, but 'ein Mensch'. Did the fault, then, not rather lie with them in having raised him at all? Though Goethe has carefully avoided introducing this point in his play, yet the fact remains—Iphigenie, too, must have been aware of it—that if Tantalus' behaviour was only in keeping with his nature, then the initial guilt lay with the Gods. This accusation, which is only implied in Iphigenie's words, is followed by another, which is definitely stated: the Gods wreaked their vengeance even on Tantalus' descendants, who could not have been guilty of having thus offended them:

Ach! und sein ganz Geschlecht trug ihren Haß (326).

Thoas is not altogether convinced. Surely, he is bound to ask himself, did not this conflict with his conception of the Gods as *just* Gods—a conception for which he was indebted to Iphigenie herself? We may be able to understand even their apparently harsh treatment of Tantalus; but that they should punish those who were wholly innocent, was completely at variance with the new creed. And so he inquires:

Trug es die Schuld des Ahnherrn oder eigne? (327).

Again Iphigenie defends her kinsfolk. She admits that they received, as their 'gewißes Erbteil', qualities which might be a doubtful possession: 'die gewaltige Brust und der Titanen kraftvolles Mark' (ll. 328-30); but, as the words 'gewißes Erbteil' imply, she could not hold them responsible. Her next statement, while admitting grave guilt on their part, is almost tantamount to an accusation of the Gods:

Doch es schmiedete  
Der Gott um ihre Stirn ein ehern Band:  
Rat, Mäßigung und Weisheit und Geduld  
Verborg er ihrem scheuen, düstern Blick (330-3).<sup>17</sup>

It was owing to the lack of these virtues that the descendants of Tantalus had, throughout the ages, perpetrated such awful crimes:

Zur Wut ward ihnen jegliche Begier,  
Und grenzenlos drang ihre Wut umher (334-5).

Each crime was avenged, and the vengeance in its turn constituted another crime: so the curse continued from one generation to another. By the very act of vengeance, the avenger became guilty—and guilt implies punishment. Thus the Gods, who are just and are unable to inflict punishment without cause, provided that they should first become guilty. This they did by denying them those virtues which might have preserved their innocence. Her kinsfolk were therefore predestined by the will of the Gods to become guilty, in order to justify the punishment which was to be inflicted upon them. By this method the Gods had insured the continuance of the curse, until such time as it should please them to end it—and they used the members of the family themselves as their instruments.<sup>18</sup>

We are now tempted to ask: Is not Iphigenie's conception of the Godhead somewhat confused? It is not, for example, so naïve and consistent as that of the barbarian King—her own convert to the true worship of Diana—who seems to believe in the absolute goodness and justice of the Gods. According to her reasoning, it is by the will of the Gods that evil exists at all. The primary cause of evil goes back to her first ancestor, whose only crime was that he had offended the Gods. Was it not rather their fault, Iphigenie seems to ask, to expect more from mortal man than was humanly possible? It is not enough to say that these are only remnants of a former belief—a belief which was instilled into her while still living with her family in Greece under the spell of the curse—and that in dwelling on the essentially revengeful nature of the Gods she merely repeats what she had learnt long ago.<sup>19</sup> On the contrary, these are her present convictions—convictions which have matured during



her years of meditation in the temple. She neither blames nor tries to justify the Gods; obviously she regards their ways as beyond her comprehension. She merely makes a statement of the facts as she sees them: the Gods were expecting too much, when they expected Tantalus to be as perfect as they are themselves, and their judgement strikes her as severe. Moreover, their punishment fell not only on him, but on his whole race; for by their decree his descendants are destined at birth to become guilty:<sup>20</sup> they come under the influence of the curse immediately. It is a problem to which she offers no solution.<sup>21</sup> Yet she is convinced of the love and goodness of her Gods; and she believes that at last, perhaps just as unaccountably, they will be pleased to end the curse. This can only be done through the instrumentality of a pure life, which will in some way offset the sin of her first ancestor; and it is her mission, she hopes, to be that instrument.

Iphigenie now gives the history of her family. It is a long recital of crimes and atrocities perpetrated by successive generations of the house of Tantalus, beginning with Pelops, Tantalus' eldest son, down to the time when Iphigenie was herself placed on the altar as a sacrifice. At this point her knowledge ends. We have to wait till the arrival of her brother and his friend to learn that Agamemnon and Klytämnestra, too, have fallen victims to the awful curse. Iphigenie then confides a secret which, we may assume, had been her own till this moment—one which was unknown even to the Greeks who were present at the altar at Aulis—namely, that when she was enticed into the camp and offered as a sacrifice, Diana herself intervened. The Goddess was apparently satisfied with Iphigenie's submission: she did not desire her blood. She ends by reminding Thoas of her arrival in their midst:

Sie lockten mit der Mutter mich ins Lager;  
 Sie rissen mich vor den Altar und weihten  
 Der Göttin dieses Haupt. Sie war versöhnt;  
 Sie wollte nicht mein Blut und hüllte rettend  
 In eine Wolke mich; in diesem Tempel  
 Erkennt' ich mich zuerst vom Tode wieder (424-9).<sup>22</sup>

The question now arises: Why should Goethe have considered it necessary to give the Tantalus story at such length? The reason is that, while a Greek dramatist, whose audience would naturally be familiar with the legend, could be content with a brief reference, a modern poet would find it advisable to enlighten his audience fully. Since Iphigenie's narrative does not alter the course of events, Goethe's sole reason for its inclusion could only be for our information. The importance which he

attaches to it, reveals, too, his own attitude to his material as a whole: his play, unlike his chief Greek source, does not deal with the return of the image—or even primarily with the return of the other ‘sister’, Iphigenie—but with the expiation of the curse by a pure soul. This is the principal *motif* of his play. He therefore considered it necessary that we should be fully aware of the awful nature of the curse at the outset; only then can we appreciate the position which Iphigenie faces now and her dilemma later. A recital of its ravages is the most effective way of emphasizing its real nature. We realize the intensity of her feelings regarding it and sympathize with her determination to expiate it at all costs. We understand at once why she resolves to follow the dictates of her conscience in the matter of confiding her secret, though her fears are not entirely dispelled; why she is firmly resolved not to marry Thoas; and why, later, in order to preserve her purity, she is prepared even to risk the lives of Orest and Pylades and her own well-being.

Thoas’ first remark on the conclusion of Iphigenie’s narrative shows that the knowledge of her descent has neither changed his regard for her nor affected his determination to marry her:

Mehr Vorzug und Vertrauen geb’ ich nicht  
Der Königstochter als der Unbekannten.  
Ich wiederhole meinen ersten Antrag:  
Komm, folge mir und teile, was ich habe! (433–6).

There is now only one other possible means of escape for her, namely, to fall back on her office of priestess; this she does:

Wie darf ich solchen Schritt, o König, wagen?  
Hat nicht die Göttin, die mich rettete,  
Allein das Recht auf mein geweihtes Leben?  
Sie hat für mich den Schutzort ausgesucht,  
Und sie bewahrt mich einem Vater, den  
Sie durch den Schein genug gestraft, vielleicht  
Zur schönsten Freude seines Alters hier,  
Vielleicht ist mir die frohe Rückkehr nah;  
Und ich, auf ihren Weg nicht achtend, hätte  
Mich wider ihren Willen hier gefesselt? (437–46).

We are here tempted to ask: Is Iphigenie using her office as a cloak? If she did so—knowing, as she does, what is at stake—little blame, I think, would attach to her. But we should remember that Iphigenie’s position is not that of an ordinary priestess to whom an unwelcome crown has been offered: she had been chosen for her office by the Goddess herself, saved from certain death with this end in view, and her salvation encouraged her to believe that she was destined by the Gods to carry out a greater mission. Her task for the present, therefore, was to

continue to serve her Goddess—'ein hoher Wille, dem ich mich ergebe' (l. 8). To her mind the dedication of her life implies not only her service in the temple, but also an effort to accomplish her mission. How it is to be performed or what sacrifices it will entail, she does not yet know clearly. Thus she is only able to give vague reasons—an allusion to her happy home and a reference to an aged father whom she evidently hopes to comfort—in support of her plea that her life is not hers to give.<sup>23</sup> Her final remark:

Ein Zeichen bat ich, wenn ich bleiben sollte (447).

shows that she does not treat the matter lightly; she is resigned to give up all her high hopes, if Diana should give her a sign to remain in Tauris for ever. But no sign had been given, and consequently a marriage is impossible.

For Thoas the fact that she is still there is sign enough. He had followed her narrative with interest, and he obviously realizes the full implications of the curse. But, like Arkas, he knows nothing of her secret aspirations, and her words are not such as to enlighten him. It is therefore not surprising that he regards her replies as mere evasion. He remarks:

Man spricht vergebens viel, um zu versagen;

Der andre hört von allem nur das Nein (450-1).

Iphigenie tries once more: she explains that her words are not intended to deceive; she has, in fact, revealed her whole soul to him:

Nicht Worte sind es, die nur blenden sollen;

Ich habe dir mein tiefstes Herz entdeckt (452-3).

Her statements were undoubtedly true; she had indeed confided in him as far as her own vague thoughts concerning her mission would enable her. That Thoas misunderstood her, was not altogether his fault. Her further appeal to him to imagine the joy of her family on her return—their future happiness, she believes, depends entirely upon it—alters nothing; and she ends:

O sendetest du mich auf Schiffen hin,

Du gäbest mir und allen neues Leben (461-2).

Annoyed by her repeated appeals, Thoas refers scathingly to the fickle and unreasonable nature of woman; to which Iphigenie at last replies that she knows wherein his happiness lies, better than he does himself—for she feels, no doubt, that he has little hope of finding happiness in a union with a member of the house of Tantalus and, incidentally, one who has room in her heart only for a great project. She therefore now thanks the Gods for the strength of mind and purpose they have given her:

Und hier dank' ich den Göttern, daß sie mir

Die Festigkeit gegeben, dieses Bündnis  
Nicht einzugehen, das sie nicht gebilligt (490-2).

This is her first definite refusal; but in her words Thoas hears not the will of the Gods, but her own inclinations:

Es spricht kein Gott; es spricht dein eigen Herz (493).

Iphigenie replies that the heart is the mouthpiece of the Gods; she believes that by following the dictates of a pure heart, which is not 'überbraust' by 'der Sturm' (l. 496), man follows divine inspiration:

Sie reden nur durch unser Herz zu uns (494).

In his anger Thoas refers scathingly to her office of priestess and to her recent confession:

Dein heilig Amt und dein geerbtes Recht  
An Jovis Tisch bringt dich den Göttern näher  
Als einen erdgebornen Wilden (499-501);

to which Iphigenie retorts:

So

Buß' ich nun das Vertraun, das du erzwangst (501-2).

Here a deadlock is reached. The King, a despot in his own land, had, we were told by Arkas, firmly resolved to marry Iphigenie. She knows that he will not let the matter rest here. She need fear no violence: Arkas had given her that assurance. But he had spoken vaguely of some other measure—one which would be no less repulsive to the humane priestess—which, he warned her, the King would assuredly put into force. The King now informs her that he has decided to decree the revival of the ancient rite of human sacrifice. He reminds her that 'von alters her' every stranger who landed on these shores, was destined to be sacrificed; he had been restrained in the past only by her 'Freundlichkeit', in which he had believed he discerned 'bald der zarten Tochter Liebe, bald stille Neigung einer Braut' (ll. 511-13). He states further that his people cry out for the sacrifice to be revived; and he ends:

Um deinetwillen halt' ich länger nicht  
Die Menge, die das Opfer dringend fordert (520-1).

Iphigenie can have little doubt regarding the implications of his words: they are only a prelude to a definite command. Moreover, it is clear from Thoas' speech that he was never altogether convinced that the suspension was right from a religious point of view. He accuses her: "Du hattest mir die Sinnen eingewiegt" (l. 516); and adds:

Doch mir verzeih' Diane, daß ich ihr  
Bisher mit Unrecht und mit innerm Vorwurf  
Die alten Opfer vorenthalten habe (506-8).

Iphigenie defends her action. She had demanded nothing for her own sake; Diana herself is opposed to human sacrifice, and to attribute such cruel traits to the Gods, is to misunderstand them entirely:

Um meinetwillen hab' ich's nie begehrt.  
Der mißversteht die Himmlischen, der sie  
Blutgierig wähnt; er dichtet ihnen nur  
Die eignen grausamen Begierden an (522-5).<sup>24</sup>

She is convinced of the rightness of her belief; did not her own experience prove it to be true?

Entzog die Göttin mich nicht selbst dem Priester?  
Ihr war mein Dienst willkommner als mein Tod (526-7).

But Thoas is unmoved. It is not for us, he retorts, to interpret such things with our human reason so that they conform with our desires. She must do her duty as priestess. And now he gives the dreaded command:

Zwei Fremde, die wir in des Ufers Höhlen  
Versteckt gefunden und die meinem Lande  
Nichts Gutes bringen, sind in meiner Hand.  
Mit diesen nehme deine Göttin wieder  
Ihr erstes, rechtes, lang entbehrtes Opfer!  
Ich sende sie hierher, du weißt den Dienst (532-7).

We cannot but admit that there is here an apparent blemish in the character of Thoas. Not only does his action conflict with his later generous behaviour in Act V, it is also inconsistent with the assurances we are given elsewhere regarding his nobility and goodness. Nor do the motives and emotions which underlie the action appear at first sight to minimize his guilt. He is obviously piqued by Iphigenie's refusal.<sup>25</sup> But his decision was not taken in the heat of the moment: it was mentioned by Arkas in the foregoing Scene as a measure upon which he was firmly resolved in the event of Iphigenie's refusing his offer of marriage. He is, no doubt, disappointed and angry, which would be a natural human reaction under the circumstances; and his anger persists, for in Act IV, Scene ii, Arkas remarks: 'Der Königs angebrachter Sinn allein bereitet diesen Fremden bitterm Tod' (ll. 1454-5). But such implacability, if there were nothing more to it, is hardly consistent with nobility. Nor would it be consistent with nobility to apply pressure on the priestess in order to enforce his will. Thoas would hardly be human if the thought of coercion did not cross his mind, but coercion was not his real or only impulse.<sup>26</sup> Again, to over-emphasize his austere qualities as an explanation of his present action, while we ignore Goethe's insistence elsewhere on his goodness, is to obtain only a half-view of his character.<sup>27</sup> Nor

does it solve our difficulty to ascribe his action to a temporary lapse into his original barbarism;<sup>28</sup> a character who excels the Greeks and becomes almost a representative of eighteenth century humanitarianism cannot afford such lapses.

What plea or justification can, then, be offered? Let us consider once again the circumstances for a moment. The old custom of human sacrifice had been suspended, a condition which Goethe's plan for a *dénouement* by Iphigenie's purity, instead of by successful scheming and divine intervention, made necessary. With the arrival of Orest and Pylades, its revival became equally necessary for Goethe's plot. Since only the King had power to authorize its revival, Goethe had no choice but to foist upon him the responsibility for an act which was not in accordance with his changed nature—the noble and generous autocrat, not Euripides' vain and foolish dupe. The exigencies of the plot, in fact, demanded an unworthy act from a worthy character. All that Goethe could do was to emphasize what we might call the mitigating circumstances. This he did by the invention of the new and wholly extraneous story of the King's son who had been killed in battle, and its reiteration here is indicative of the importance Goethe wished to have attached to it. It is Thoas' justification. In support of the marriage proposal, Arkas referred to the distrust and suspicion which had grown up between the King and his nobles (ll. 157-63); and in introducing the theme in the present Scene Thoas insisted that his proposal, though it coincided with his personal wishes, was prompted in the first instance by national and patriotic necessity. Now he dwells on his loneliness, he reiterates his suspicions regarding his nobles' disloyalty, he even expresses fears of subversive plots and assassination. His people, too, are turning against him; while formerly they welcomed the gifts of the Gods, bestowed so bountifully as a result of Iphigenie's ministrations, they now in their adversity denounce the King and the new forms of worship.

Das Murren meines Volks vernahm ich nicht;  
Nun rufen sie die Schuld von meines Sohnes  
Frühzeit'gem Tode lauter über mich.  
Um deinetwillen halt' ich länger nicht  
Die Menge, die das Opfer dringend fordert (517-21).<sup>29</sup>

It is not weakness that impels Thoas to accede to the clamouring of his people, for in his heart he does not find them wholly wrong. Weakness he has shown, in his own view, but it was, we must admit, the laudable weakness of indulgence to the wishes of Iphigenie, whom he had come to regard as almost a divinity. The truth is that he was an old man and never quite

able to rid himself of his old beliefs;<sup>80</sup> though he had accepted her creed of just and loving Gods, he had never actually expelled from his own mind a belief in the validity of human sacrifice, the offering of which he regards as a duty (l. 515). Thus he determines to return to what he believes to be the true ritual.<sup>81</sup>

We may sum up: If we accept Thoas' and Arkas' statements regarding the conditions in the land as true, or as representing what they believe to be true—there is nothing in the text which, to my mind, should cause us to doubt either—then the King's character emerges as consistent throughout. From first to last Thoas clings to some of his old religious beliefs and only reluctantly allows himself to be persuaded to deny Diana what he regards as her due. So long as all goes well in his kingdom, he is content. But misfortune changes the attitude of his fickle followers and of his people. He is then faced with a situation which forces him either to marry again or to revive the ancient rite of human sacrifice. Either will suffice to remove the cause of unrest, and for a wise ruler, as we are assured Thoas is, either will be more politic than to let matters drift and to face the probable task later of quelling a rebellion. Iphigenie's refusal to marry him leaves him no choice: had she consented—the possibility of a marriage with another woman is not even mooted—the need to revive the old rite would never have arisen. Moreover, he had sometimes flattered himself that she might even welcome his proposal. He now finds that he was mistaken. Thoas, let us admit, is no more than he claims to be, namely, 'ein Mensch', or as Iphigenie states more explicitly, 'ein edler Mann', and is not proof against the normal human reactions of disappointment, pique or anger. He was not in the first instance actuated by thoughts of coercion, but he was sufficiently human to hope that his action, which was, he believed, in the true interests of his crown and his people, would, by its unwelcome nature, conduce to the fulfilment of his most ardent personal wishes. Most important, he was convinced that he was justified morally. For not only would the resuscitation of human sacrifice secure, so he believed, permanent peace in the land, it was a rite which belonged to the true worship of Diana, neglect of which he had allowed only with misgiving. In taking this fateful step Thoas is therefore animated not by the more ignoble, though natural, human impulses and emotions, which are only incidental, but by the conviction that his action is at once politically wise and, from the religious and moral points of view, right and justifiable.

## ACT I, SCENE IV: IPHIGENIE

ACT I ends, as it begins, with a monologue by Iphigenie. In these monologues, which are complementary, we are given all that is necessary for a complete understanding of her character. The first reviews in retrospect the life which causes her to appeal to Diana to save her from a second death in Tauris: the second reveals her reaction to the new circumstances arising out of the King's command and gives a statement regarding her religious creed.

The monologue begins, as the first ends, with a reminder to Diana that she has power to save:

Du hast Wolken, gnädige Retterin,  
Einzuhüllen unschuldig Verfolgte,  
Und auf Winden dem ehrnen Geschick sie  
Aus den Armen über das Meer,  
Über der Erde weiteste Strecken,  
Und wohin es dir gut dünkt, zu tragen (538-43).

A Goddess who is able to perform this feat, is also able to save the strangers from the death which threatens them. But, Iphigenie seems to ask, will she do so? Will events not be allowed to run their course, while the Goddess stands idly by? Yet she cannot believe that such bloodshed can have the blessing of Diana: it is in direct conflict with that enlightenment and humanitarianism which form the basis of Iphigenie's creed. Partly to reassure herself, it seems to me, she reiterates her belief that the fate, which now threatens the two strangers and herself, cannot be by the ordaining, or to the liking, of a Goddess who has already proved herself willing to save; for, far from desiring the destruction of men, Diana, she insists, takes delight in affording them loving protection and care:

Und dein Blick ruht über den Deinen,  
Wie dein Licht, das Leben der Nächste,  
Über der Erde ruhet und waltet (546-8).

And this brings us to the main point in the monologue, her prayer:

O, enthalte vom Blut meine Hände! (549).<sup>32</sup>

We thus find Iphigenie faced with a new dilemma. It is her duty, as priestess, to conduct the ceremony at the altar. She knows that the guilt of shedding human blood by her own hand<sup>33</sup> will as effectively destroy the prospect of her ever expiating the curse, as would a marriage binding her with Thoas or banishment from Tauris before the Gods have decreed. It is therefore vital for her, if she is to carry out her mission, to avoid this new



peril; for how could she, guilty of a crime only little less terrible than those committed by her forefathers, hope to wipe out a curse which she holds can only be expiated by a pure soul?<sup>34</sup> Such guilt would of necessity destroy all her hopes.<sup>35</sup>

For the present, however, Iphigenie contents herself with stressing only two aspects of the case: (a) the shedding of blood is repellent to her, and (b) it is not in harmony with her conception of the nature of the Gods. She envisages with dread those hours when her guilt would rise up before her:

Nimmer bringt es Segen und Ruhe,  
Und die Gestalt des zufällig Ermordeten  
Wird auf des traurig-unwilligen Mörders  
Böse Stunden lauern und schrecken (550-3).

It is natural that man should recoil from such acts, for they conflict with that law of love which we find expressed in its highest form in the love of the Gods; as Iphigenie puts it:

Denn die Unsterblichen lieben der Menschen  
Weitverbreitete, gute Geschlechter (554-5).

She ends her monologue with a simple statement of her faith and creed: not only would the Gods willingly extend man's brief span of life, they would gladly bestow on him some of the qualities of their own eternal heaven:

Und sie fristen das flüchtige Leben  
Gerne dem Sterblichen, wollen ihm gerne  
Ihres eigenen, ewigen Himmels  
Mitgenießendes, fröhliches Anschauen  
Eine Weile gönnen und lassen (556-60).

## ACT II, SCENE I: PYLADES, OREST

ACT II is for the most part a continuation of the exposition. In Act I we are told all we require to know of the early life of Iphigenie, of the Tantalus curse, and the history of her family down to their separation at Aulis: in Act II we are informed of the events which have since taken place in Greece. For this material Goethe drew upon the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus, though Euripides' *Electra* and *Orestes* and Sophocles' *Electra*, which respectively cover parts of the ground of the *Oresteia*, were not unknown to him. In Act I Iphigenie holds the stage: in Act II it is Pylades. There are two Scenes. Scene i, a dialogue between Pylades and Orest, sets forth the cause and object of their journey to Tauris and gives the more recent history of the house of Tantalus—it is the end of the *Choëphoroe* and the beginning of the *Eumenides*; Scene ii, a dialogue between Pylades and Iphigenie, covers the ground of the *Agamemnon*, to which Pylades adds a faked story of a fratricide by his 'brother'. It will be seen, therefore, that much in the Act is material of a preparatory kind, but for the sake of convenience we may assume the exposition proper to end with Scene i.<sup>38</sup>

The chief questions which Scene i raises are: (a) What was Orest's attitude to his crime before and after its execution, and how did it compare with other crimes committed under the spell of the curse? (b) If in murdering his mother he performed his first duty, that towards his father, and in doing so carried out the will of the Gods, why should he be stricken with remorse? (c) If he believes that he can atone for his crime by death alone, can any healing by Iphigenie's influence, or indeed by any human agency, be really effective? If not—and clearly in his present mood nothing short of death could suffice—how is the difficulty surmounted? (d) What reason has Orest for his belief that he will find peace after his atonement by death, and is his belief justified? (e) Why was the oracle ambiguous? Full answers to most of these questions can only be given later in our interpretation, but the present Scene serves to introduce them.

Orest's opening speech at once stresses three points: (a) He is convinced that he is about to die:

Es ist der Weg des Todes, den wir treten;  
Mit jedem Schritt wird meine Seele stiller (561-2).

(b) Only by death, he believes, can he find release from the pursuit of the Furies:

Als ich Apollen bat, das gräßliche  
Geleit der Rachegeister von der Seite  
Mir abzunehmen, schien er Hülff' und Rettung  
Im Tempel seiner vielgeliebten Schwester,  
Die über Tauris herrscht, mit hoffnungsreichen,  
Gewissen Götterworten zu versprechen;  
Und nun erfüllet sich's, daß alle Not  
Mit meinem Leben völlig enden soll (563-70).

(c) In his present plight he feels he can face death with equanimity:

Wie leicht wird's mir, dem eine Götterhand  
Das Herz zusammendrückt, den Sinn betäubt,  
Dem schönen Licht der Sonne zu entsagen! (571-3).

The thought of dying publicly on the altar, instead of by the hand of a kinsman, is at any rate a comfort—a fine piece of irony:

Besser hier vor dem Altar  
Als im verworfnen Winkel, wo die Netze  
Der nahverwandte Meuchelmörder stellt (578-80).

How different is Pylades' mentality. He is not prepared to die. Far from believing the Gods are set upon destroying them, he hopes with their help to find a means of escape:

Ich denke nicht den Tod; ich sinn' und horche,  
Ob nicht zu irgend einer frohen Flucht  
Die Götter Rat und Wege zubereiten (601-3).

Even on the altar, when the hand of the priestess is raised to initiate the sacrifice, his one thought will be his friend's and his own salvation. His final words give his reasons for his faith: Apollo himself had promised that they should find help and comfort and above all a safe return:

Apoll  
Gab uns das Wort, im Heiligtum der Schwester  
Sei Trost und Hülff' und Rückkehr dir bereitet;  
Der Götter Worte sind nicht doppelsinnig,  
Wie der Gedrückte sie im Unmut wähnt (610-4).<sup>37</sup>

The breach between their respective interpretations of the oracle is at once obvious. While Orest suspects it holds some hidden sinister meaning, Pylades accepts the words of the Gods at their face value.<sup>38</sup> One might question Pylades' sincerity; perhaps he only seeks to comfort and encourage his friend.<sup>39</sup> But his subsequent behaviour indicates an implicit belief in the Gods and in the message, as he understood it, that Apollo had given them. It is worthy of note that Iphigenie, too, unquestioningly accepts, though not without reluctance, Pylades' literal interpretation.

Why should the oracle be so ambiguous as to mislead all three

Greeks? And what end does its ambiguity serve in the economy of the plot? The exact wording is not given till near the end of Act V:

“Bringst du die Schwester, die an Tauris' Ufer  
Im Heiligtume wider Willen bleibt,  
Nach Griechenland, so löset sich der Fluch” (2113-5).

And Orest, addressing Iphigenie, voices its true import:

Wir legten's von Apollens Schwester aus,  
Und er gedachte dich! (2116-7).

In the first place, it is the oracle and the misunderstanding which it inspires, that lead the two men to Tauris; it is his misinterpretation which induces Pylades to evolve and the others to concur in the plan for the theft of the image; it is Iphigenie's acceptance of the false interpretation which gives rise to her mental and moral conflict in Act IV. Goethe's plot, in fact, evolves around it. And the reader, too, takes the return of the image for granted till the exact wording of the oracle can be revealed, i.e., till the characters themselves recognize the delusion under which they have laboured.

But we must, I believe, assume a change in Orest's attitude since he first received the message of Apollo; his loss of faith is recent.<sup>40</sup> The 'Schwester' whom he should restore to Delphi,<sup>41</sup> could be none other than Diana. He could only interpret the message in that way, for his own sister, Electra, lived in Greece, while his elder sister, Iphigenie, he believed to be dead, sacrificed on the altar at Aulis. If a thought of the latter did cross his mind, it could only have meant that peace could be found in the underworld alone. Had the message been more explicit, had he been told that Iphigenie had been miraculously saved and was alive in Tauris, would he have believed? Would he have believed that Apollo set so much store by *her* return? Could he have believed that he should be freed from the awful Furies chiefly by *her* influence? I think not. The oracle, however, taken literally, could inspire him with confidence. What was it but a bargain? If he restored Diana to Delphi—naturally she longed for release from the land of the barbarians—then, as a reward for services rendered, he would be freed. His task was clear, the promise definite, and the word of Apollo guaranteed the cooperation of the Gods and a safe return. These were indeed 'hoffnungsreiche, gewisse Götterworte' (ll. 567-8). Their arrest in Tauris, however, with the collapse, as it seemed, of their mission, was surely sufficient reason to cause him to seek some other meaning in the oracle than that which it at first seemed to imply.

In sending Orest to Tauris, Apollo had, however, a greater end in view than mere relief from the Furies: without revealing the fact to him, he was giving him an opportunity of playing a part in the expiation of the Tantalus curse—just as Diana, with the same end in view, had brought Iphigenie there.<sup>42</sup> But why, we may well ask, was he given such an opportunity? Iphigenie had led a blameless life: Orest, on the other hand, was guilty of a crime as heinous as any perpetrated by his ancestors. But there is one vital difference: Orest was the first member of the house of Tantalus, so far as we know, who committed his crime purely out of a sense of duty—even then with abhorrence—and he was the first to suffer remorse.<sup>43</sup> His was the first instance of repentance, symbolized by the Furies, and it was possible, therefore, for the Gods to take the necessary steps for his deliverance. But, we may ask again, why should Orest repent? Repentance itself is a gift of the Gods. It is the fruit of that 'Rat, Mäßigung und Weisheit und Geduld' which had been denied his ancestors. Why should these saving virtues have been granted to him? To this question Goethe gives no answer. We can only assume that the Gods deem the curse to have run its course and now ordain its termination.<sup>44</sup> With this end in view they grant to those who are to be their instruments—to Orest no less than to Iphigenie—the qualities that are necessary for the fulfilment of their plans. Orest possessed one other virtue beside his fidelity to duty, abhorrence of his crime and remorse, a virtue which is greater than any of these, namely, submission to the will of the Gods. In accepting, even welcoming, whatever punishment they decreed, and in whatever form, he evinces a submission which is no less than that of Iphigenie herself.

Thus both the members of the house of Tantalus with whom our play deals, possess those virtues or qualifications which will enable the Gods to carry out their good work. But there is a third member of the family, Electra, who, we gather from Orest, harboured feelings of hatred and revenge. Is it not possible, after peace has been attained in the hearts and lives of Orest and Iphigenie, for the curse to break out anew through her? This possibility was not absent from Goethe's mind, but it was too far removed from the subject of *Iphigenie auf Tauris* to be introduced here. It was obviously a subject for a separate drama; and we know from the *Italienische Reise* that for a time Goethe toyed with the plan of writing a work in which, after the return of Orest and Iphigenie to Delphi, the three should meet and complete harmony should finally reign. But this work, *Iphigenie in Delphi*, was never written, and we possess only

a short sketch of the plot. The source which Goethe used, Hyginus' *Roman Book of Fables*, describes how Electra, having heard a rumour that Orestes had been sacrificed at Tauris, comes to Delphi to enquire about his fate. She brings with her the axe with which Clytemnestra had murdered Agamemnon and Orestes had killed his mother, to lay it on the altar where it should rest for ever. Iphigenia, together with Orestes and Pylades, arrives upon the scene, she is pointed out to Electra as the priestess who had sacrificed Orestes, and Electra raises the axe to strike her down. Just in time they recognize each other and a happy reunion follows.

Obviously here was material for a play showing the ultimate end of the curse. So great was Goethe's delight with it that it began to interfere with his work on *Iphigenie auf Tauris*: 'Sodann aber geriet die Arbeit in Stocken', he writes in the *Italienische Reise*, 'ja, ich ward auf eine neue Erfindung geführt, nämlich Iphigenia auf Delphi zu schreiben, welches ich auch sogleich getan hätte, wenn nicht die Zerstreung und ein Pflichtgefühl gegen das ältere Stück mich abgehalten hätte'.<sup>45</sup> Again: 'Hätte ich nicht besser getan, nach meinem ersten Entschluß diese Dinge fragmentarisch in die Welt zu schicken, und neue Gegenstände, an denen ich frischeren Anteil nehme, mit frischem Mut und Kräften zu unternehmen? Tāt' ich nicht besser, Iphigenia auf Delphi zu schreiben, als mich mit den Grillen des Tasso herum zu schlagen . . .'.<sup>46</sup>

The sketch of the new work, given in the *Italienische Reise*, is as follows:—

'Elektra, in gewisser Hoffnung, daß Orest das Bild der Taurischen Diana nach Delphi bringen werde, erscheint in dem Tempel des Apoll und widmet die grausame Axt, die so viel Unheil in Pelops Hause angerichtet, als schließliches Sühnopfer dem Gotte. Zu ihr tritt, leider, einer der Griechen und erzählt, wie er Orest und Pylades nach Tauris begleitet, die beiden Freunde zum Tode führen sehen und sich glücklich gerettet. Die leidenschaftliche Elektra kennt sich selbst nicht und weiß nicht, ob sie gegen Götter oder Menschen ihre Wut richten soll.

Indessen sind Iphigenie, Orest und Pylades gleichfalls zu Delphi angekommen. Iphigeniens heilige Ruhe kontrastiert gar merkwürdig mit Elektrens irdischer Leidenschaft, als die beiden Gestalten wechselseitig unerkant zusammenreffen. Der entflohene Grieche erblickt Iphigenien, erkennt die Priesterin, welche die Freunde geopfert, und entdeckt es Elektren. Diese ist im Begriff mit demselbigen Beil, welches sie dem Altar wieder entreißt, Iphigenien zu ermorden, als eine glückliche Wendung dieses letzte schreckliche Übel von den Geschwistern abwendet.

Wenn diese Szene gelingt, so ist nicht leicht etwas Größeres und Rührenderes auf dem Theater gesehen worden. Wo soll man aber Hände und Zeit hernehmen, wenn auch der Geist willig wäre!<sup>47</sup>

There are a few points to be noted in this all too brief plan, which seems to bring the ethics of the proposed play into line with those of *Iphigenie auf Tauris*. Elektra, though she is still 'leidenschaftlich', brings the fatal axe 'als Sühnopfer'—she repents, we are obviously to assume, of the role she had played in inciting Orest to kill his mother, and desires to see the curse ended; she comes not for any advantage of her own, but in the hope of learning that Orest has found deliverance. She apparently knows of Apollo's promise, and, on hearing now of her brother's death, has her moment of weakness and doubt: '(sie) kennt sich selbst nicht und weiß nicht, ob sie gegen Götter oder Menschen ihre Wut richten soll'. When the priestess who has sacrificed Orest is pointed out to her, we can well imagine that she is prompted solely by the thought of avenging her brother. It is unfortunate, however, that Goethe does not give a clue as to how he intended to bring about the 'glückliche Wendung'. Did he conceive that Electra would recognize her sister, and, wishing, as she no doubt does, that the family curse, with its consequent shedding of kindred blood, should cease, she would allow the axe to fall to the ground, to learn later that her deed, had it been committed, would have been a terrible mistake? Some such scene would bring Elektra, too, into line with her brother and sister. For the continuation or termination of the curse—let us be quite frank about it—depends not upon the Gods alone, but also on man's attitude of mind. Whatever the method or dramatic means, we may at any rate assume that this last act of *Iphigenie in Delphi* would show us all three Tantalids changed in heart, repentant, submissive, and possessing, as Iphigenie puts it, the necessary 'Rat, Mäßigung und Weisheit und Geduld'. The revival or continuation of the old curse would, under such circumstances, be an impossibility.

The remainder of the Scene serves mainly to emphasize points we have already noted. Orest, like Iphigenie, stresses the awful nature of the curse. He expresses the same love and high regard for their father, into whose likeness he grew up, thus becoming a living reproach to his mother, for whom he had little love. The memory of Elektra fills him with pity, as she sat alone, weeping and talking of their 'hoher Vater'. He thinks of Agamemnon's return and his foul murder. But Pylades adjures him rather to look forward to the great task to which the Gods have appointed him:

Die Götter brauchen manchen guten Mann  
 Zu ihrem Dienst auf dieser weiten Erde;  
 Sie haben noch auf dich gezählt; sie gaben  
 Dich nicht dem Vater zum Geleite mit,  
 Da er unwillig nach dem Orkus ging (632-6).

In vain Pylades reminds him of happier days; he assures him of his undying love and even begs him to thank the Gods that they have already accomplished so much through him. But Orest only reiterates his despair:

Mich haben sie zum Schlächter auserkoren,  
 Zum Mörder meiner doch verehrten Mutter,  
 Und, eine Schandtat schändlich rächend, mich  
 Durch ihren Wink zu Grund gerichtet. Glaube,  
 Sie haben es auf Tantals Haus gerichtet,  
 Und ich, der letzte, soll nicht schuldlos, soll  
 Nicht ehrenvoll vergehn (707-13).

Pylades' reply is illuminating: he refuses to believe that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children; on the contrary we inherit their blessing, but not their curse:

Die Götter rächen  
 Der Väter Missetat nicht an dem Sohn;  
 Ein jeglicher, gut oder böse, nimmt  
 Sich seinen Lohn mit seiner Tat hinweg.  
 Es erbt der Eltern Segen, nicht ihr Fluch (713-7).

To Orest's retort that it is not their blessing that brings them to Tauris, Pylades can only reply:

Doch wenigstens der hohen Götter Wille (719).

This is true enough; and Orest sums up the position as he sees it:

So ist's ihr Wille denn, der uns verderbt (720).

Such pessimism, as we have seen, is opposed to Pylades' whole nature. He refuses to entertain doubts about the Gods or their good intentions; it is man's place to obey unquestioningly and to await results. He therefore again reminds Orest of Apollo's command and promise:

Tu, was sie dir gebieten, und erwarte!  
 Bringst du die Schwester zu Apollen hin,  
 Und wohnen beide dann vereint zu Delphi,  
 Verehrt von einem Volk, das edel denkt,  
 So wird für diese Tat das hohe Paar  
 Dir gnädig sein, sie werden aus der Hand  
 Der Unterird'schen dich erretten (721-7).

When this fails, Pylades tries his two final arguments: (a) Diana



herself longs to be liberated—a fact which was expressly stated in the oracle and one which gives added assurance of success:

Diane sehnet sich  
Von diesem rauhen Ufer der Barbaren  
Und ihren blut'gen Menschenopfern weg.  
Wir waren zu der schönen Tat bestimmt,  
Uns wird sie auferlegt (734–8).

And (b) he has discovered that a priestess reigns in the temple, who is opposed to human sacrifice:

Von unsern Wächtern  
Hab' ich bisher gar vieles ausgelockt.  
Ich weiß, ein fremdes, göttergleiches Weib  
Hält jenes blutige Gesetz gefesselt;  
Ein reines Herz und Weihrauch und Gebet  
Bringt sie den Göttern dar ((770–5).

Orest, however, is equally well informed—though we are not given the source of his information. He knows of the King's command to resuscitate the old rite of human sacrifice, an event which he ascribes to the curse and the proximity of the criminal:

Es scheint, ihr lichtet Reich verlor die Kraft  
Durch des Verbrechers Nähe, den der Fluch  
Wie eine breite Nacht verfolgt und deckt.  
Die fromme Blutgier löst den alten Brauch  
Von seinen Fesseln los, uns zu verderben.  
Der wilde Sinn des Königs tötet uns;  
Ein Weib wird uns nicht retten, wenn er zürnt (779–85).

But Pylades is undaunted. Just because their fate depends on a woman, his hopes run high. Obviously he intends to try to gain her assistance. But he must act with care, he must speak with her first and alone, and, knowing Orest and fearing his present mood, he desires to have another talk with him immediately afterwards:

Still,  
Sie kommt; laß uns allein! Ich darf nicht gleich  
Ihr unsre Namen nennen, unser Schicksal  
Nicht ohne Rückhalt ihr vertraun. Du gehst,  
Und eh' sie mit dir spricht, treff' ich dich noch (793–7).

The reason for his anxiety becomes obvious in his deception of Iphigenie in the next scene.

## ACT II, SCENE II: PYLADES, IPHIGENIE

IN Act II, Scene ii, Goethe goes back to the beginning of the *Oresteia*: Pylades tells Iphigenie of Agamemnon's return as a victor from Troy and of his murder by his wife, Klytämnestra, and her lover, Ägisth. But he goes no further: it is left to Orest to relate in Act III how he himself murdered his mother to avenge his father. Pylades is careful, however, not to disclose their identity; instead he tells the priestess that his companion—his eldest brother, he maintains—was guilty of fratricide and at the behest of Apollo has come to Tauris to seek relief from the pursuing Furies. These two stories, the true and the false, prepare the ground for the meeting of brother and sister in Act III: by the true, Iphigenie is informed of the family history down to the point where Orest can begin the story, or confession, of his crime; because of the false she regards Orest as a stranger. The deception of the priestess is vital for the development of the plot, as will be shown in our discussion of the next Act; our chief concern here is to examine the deception itself.

The Scene opens with a short speech by Iphigenie:

Woher du seist und kommst, o Fremdling, sprich !  
 Mir scheint es, daß ich eher einem Griechen  
 Als einem Skythen dich vergleichen soll.  
 Gefährlich ist die Freiheit, die ich gebe;  
 Die Götter wenden ab, was euch bedroht ! (798–802);

to which Pylades replies:

O süße Stimme ! Vielwillkommner Ton  
 Der Muttersprach' in einem fremden Lande !  
 Des väterlichen Hafens blaue Berge  
 Seh' ich, Gefangner, neu willkommen wieder  
 Vor meinen Augen. Laß dir diese Freude  
 Versichern, daß auch ich ein Grieche bin (803–8).

Pylades' words indicate that Iphigenie has addressed him in Greek, and her reason, she states, is that his appearance betrays his nationality. Moreover, the content of her speech reveals her as a possible friend, for she deplores the fate that threatens them. Circumstances, Pylades no doubt feels, are propitious, and he at once assures her of his joy in finding a compatriot.

These opening lines, dramatically effective though they are, are on the whole weak. I cannot but feel that it was a mistake on Goethe's part to mention specifically the language medium. For now we are encouraged to ask: what language was spoken in the rest of the play, in Iphigenie's monologues, in the dialogues between the Scythians, and above all in the final scenes between

Scythians and Greeks? Though Iphigenie may have spoken the barbarian tongue, this would hardly be true of Orest and Pylades; and we may dismiss the possibility of the barbarians knowing Greek—it is stressed that communications between their respective countries were practically non-existent and they could not have learned it from Iphigenie, of whose identity they were ignorant and whom they took to be an Amazon. Yet Greeks and barbarians converse fluently in a medium which Goethe is careful not to mention. But in our present scene the language is mentioned: it serves as part of the means by which the compatriots recognize each other as such. The recognition could have been based on appearances alone, with perhaps a remark from Iphigenie that she, too, is Greek. The reader would then have imagined the whole play as taking place in some mysterious, unnamed language. Strictly speaking, without this specific reference, the problem would never occur to the reader at all—he would be unjustified in allowing such extraneous and technical matters to interfere with his aesthetic enjoyment of a work of art—nor would it have come within the just sphere of the critics' investigation.<sup>48</sup>

It is no more than natural that Pylades, whose one thought is to effect a safe return to Greece of Orest, himself, and the image—though he admits that in the presence of the priestess he loses sight of his mission for a moment—should enquire concerning her identity:

O sage, wenn dir ein Verhängnis nicht  
Die Lippe schließt, aus welchem unsrer Stämme  
Du deine göttergleiche Herkunft zählst! (812-4).

It should suffice, Iphigenie replies, that it is the priestess, with whom he speaks, chosen and hallowed by the Goddess herself. Her reason for the evasion is not clear; perhaps she hopes first to gain some information about her family; for, as we have seen, thoughts of them are ever uppermost in her mind. At any rate her evasion serves a definite end in the development of the plot. Had she revealed her identity now, Pylades would have taken her cooperation for granted; he would have told her the whole truth, instead of his concocted story of a crime of fratricide by his alleged brother; sister and brother would have known each other at the beginning of Act III—for Pylades would certainly not have concealed such important news from his friend—and Orest's confession would have been made, not to a stranger, but to a sister. The effects of her sympathy would have been minimized; their recognition would not have taken place at the very moment calculated to throw Orest into his trance; in fact the whole of Act III, with its process of healing, would have been

thrown completely out of gear. Goethe's plan demanded that the Greeks should remain in ignorance of each other's identity for yet a while. Its importance is shown by Iphigenie's continued evasion of Pylades' inquiries later in the scene. She makes no response to his questions:

Bist du die Tochter eines Freundes ? Bist  
Du nachbarlich in dieser Stadt geboren ? (886-7).

And at the end of the scene, after she has obtained what information concerning her family she can absorb for the moment, she makes a hurried exit with the promise: 'Du wirst mich wiedersehn' (918).<sup>49</sup>

Instead of vouchsafing to Pylades the information he desires, Iphigenie gives a sudden turn to their conversation by inquiring about the stranger's identity and the reason for their unfortunate journey:

Sage, wer du seist,  
Und welch unselig waltendes Geschick  
Mit dem Gefährten dich hierher gebracht (817-9).

Pylades now begins his tale of deception: They are brothers, sons of Adrast; he is the youngest, Cephelus, and his companion is Laodamas. Between them was another brother—his name is not given—who was 'rauh und wild' and disturbed 'schon im Spiel der ersten Jugend Einigkeit und Lust' (ll. 824-9). Yet all went comparatively well till their father's death after his return from Troy, when a quarrel arose about their inheritance; he continues:

Ich neigte mich zum ältesten. Er erschlug  
Den Bruder. Um der Blutschuld willen treibt  
Die Furie gewaltig ihn umher (835-7).

Pylades obviously aims at winning the priestess' sympathy and, if possible, her active cooperation; for not only is the second brother described as a quarreller and trouble-maker, but the very cause of the quarrel, an inheritance, in which the youngest is on the side of the eldest, might indicate that the other had contested his birthright. Moreover, the crime itself, fratricide instead of matricide, would undoubtedly be less abhorrent to the priestess. Admittedly it would have been preferable to avoid such a subject altogether. But this was impossible: a reason for their journey had to be given, which Pylades confides truthfully enough:

Doch diesem wilden Ufer sendet uns  
Apoll, der Delphische, mit Hoffnung zu.  
Im Tempel seiner Schwester hieß er uns  
Der Hülfe segensvolle Hand erwarten.  
Gefangen sind wir und hierher gebracht  
Und dir als Opfer dargestellt. Du weißt's (838-43).

It should be noted that Pylades is careful to mention Apollo's intervention: the God himself is on their side, and his command is tantamount to one from his sister, Diana. The priestess will hardly thwart the expressed wishes of the Gods. Thus Pylades truthfully discloses facts which will further his ends, altering others which might affect them unfavourably. The deception has far-reaching results: not only does she meet Orest as a complete stranger, she regards him as sorely afflicted by remorse for a crime of which he is only partly guilty and, on learning of Orest's similar plight, draws her fateful analogy.<sup>50</sup>

One important point has, however, been suppressed by Pylades: he does not mention the proposed theft of the image. The priestess of Diana would hardly acquiesce in such a project. Would she not rather regard it as a desecration of the temple placed in her keeping? She might refuse to believe that Apollo had ever demanded such a thing. Thus Pylades plans either to carry off the image without her knowledge or to postpone divulging the whole of the oracle till he is more certain of her cooperation. The propitious moment for the latter course comes after brother and sister have recognized each other. But even then, as we shall see, the inconsistency between the demand for the theft of the image, which is implied in Apollo's oracle, and her own sense of duty both towards her Goddess and her King, is an obstacle Iphigenie is never able to surmount and is one of the factors underlying her moral conflict in Act IV

In yet another respect Pylades' story is misleading, namely, in his warning to Iphigenie to 'spare' his companion. To her inquiry whether Troy had fallen, he gives the curt reply: 'Es liegt', and adds an impassioned appeal that she should not mention the past to his companion, for his memories tend to throw his mind into a turmoil and awaken the Furies:

O, sichere du uns Rettung zu!  
 Beschleunige die Hülfe, die ein Gott  
 Versprach! Erbarme meines Bruders dich!  
 O, sag' ihm bald ein gutes, holdes Wort!  
 Doch schone seiner, wenn du mit ihm sprichst,  
 Das bitt' ich eifrig; denn es wird gar leicht  
 Durch Freud' und Schmerz und durch Erinnerung  
 Sein Innerstes ergriffen und zerrüttet.  
 Ein fieberhafter Wahnsinn fällt ihn an,  
 Und seine schöne, freie Seele wird  
 Den Furien zum Raube hingegeben (845-55).

There is, of course, some truth in all this—we see the effects of his memories and something of the 'feverish madness' in Act III—but Pylades has another end in view. He had just spun his

'lügenhaft Gewebe', and he knows that if the priestess should question the honest and unsuspecting Orest about the supposed crime of fratricide, his whole tale will be exposed. He cannot prevent all intercourse; he therefore does the next best thing and begs her to avoid the subject. Moreover, the reasons he gives and his apparent anxiety for his 'brother' are calculated to win her sympathy. And by her silence, we must assume, she assents: the object of the warning has been attained. But how do events work out? During their conversation (III, 1) we find that Iphigenie is careful to avoid any reference to the stranger's past life—but for Pylades' warning it would surely have been natural for her to ask some questions—and instead confines herself to inquiries about her own family. She is struck by the similarity of what Pylades has told her about his 'brother' and the story the latter tells about Orest, a similarity which prompts her to draw an analogy between their respective fates—whereupon Orest reveals his identity. It may be urged that Iphigenie breaks faith with Pylades, and to some extent this is true. But he had also appealed for her sympathy, 'ein gutes, holdes Wort', and this was her impulse. Besides, in encouraging the stranger to talk about himself, she does the very thing Pylades had asked her not to do. But the deception was so complete that she had no reason to suspect that Orest and the stranger—one of a family of three brothers, according to Pylades' tale—were one and the same. Clearly Iphigenie felt on safe ground.<sup>51</sup>

The warning ended, Pylades is able to answer Iphigenie's questions in greater detail. Troy, he states, has fallen after a ten years' siege, it is in ruins, and will rise no more. But many noble Greeks have fallen, and among those he mentions is Achilles. Iphigenie's exclamation:

So seid ihr Götterbilder auch zu Staub! (864),

is significant: it at once reveals her admiration for Achilles and her sorrow at the news of his death, which is in strong contrast with the attitude of Euripides' Iphigenia. In Euripides Achilles unwittingly played a part in the plan by which she was lured to Aulis, only to find there, instead of a marriage with the young hero, death as a sacrifice on the altar. In Goethe's play there is no mention of a marriage and consequently no such unworthy means of enticement. Goethe's Iphigenie therefore remembers Achilles with admiration and respect. The omission of the marriage theme also alters the conception of the characters of Agamemnon and Klytämnestra: the former, though he still performs a monstrous deed, does not resort to trickery; the latter is placed in a less favourable light, for she has suffered

no deception and has thus less valid reason for harbouring a grievance against her husband. It is true she loses a daughter, but that is also true of Agamemnon—and it is stressed repeatedly that Iphigenie was 'sein Liebstes'—while the impression we are given of Klytämnestra is that she was barren of love. Besides, Agamemnon had acted at the behest of the Gods and in the interests of his country—not out of weakness, as is to some extent the case in Euripides. Thus, the omission of the Achilles incident, with all that goes with it, deprives Klytämnestra of all valid grounds for revenge.

Pylades now comes to the story of Agamemnon's murder. He has not mentioned his name among those of the fallen, and Iphigenie's heart leaps with joy:

Er schweigt von meinem Vater, nennt ihn nicht  
Mit den Erschlagenen. Ja! er lebt mir noch!  
Ich werd' ihn sehn! o hoffe, liebes Herz! (867-9).

But she is soon to be disillusioned. The Greeks who fell in battle, Pylades continues, were fortunate, for they escaped the fate that awaited the survivors, prepared for them by 'ein feindlich aufgebrachtter Gott' (l. 874). Chief of these was Agamemnon:

Klytämnestra hat  
Mit Hülff Ägisthens den Gemahl bertückt,  
Am Tage seiner Rückkehr ihn ermordet (880-2).

And as Iphigenie insists on being told, he relates in detail how the 'schwere Tat', as she calls it, was committed:

Am Tage seiner Ankunft, da der König  
Vom Bad erquickt und ruhig sein Gewand  
Aus der Gemahlin Hand verlangend, stieg,  
Warf die Verderbliche ein faltenreich  
Und künstlich sich verwirrendes Gewebe  
Ihm auf die Schultern, um das edle Haupt;  
Und da er wie von einem Netze sich  
Vergebens zu entwickeln strebte, schlug<sup>52</sup>  
Ägisth ihn, der Verräter, und verhüllt  
Ging zu den Toten dieser große Fürst (891-900).<sup>53</sup>

To her question:

Und welchen Lohn erhielt der Mitverschworne? (901),

Pylades gives an answer which at once exposes her guilty life:

Ein Reich und Bette, das er schon besaß (902).

What was Iphigenie's attitude to the crime? Her first reaction, as we have seen, is revealed in her reference to it as a 'schwere Tat'; now that she also knows the motive that inspired it, she expresses utter condemnation:

So trieb zur Schandtät eine böse Lust ? (903).<sup>54</sup>

Besides revealing her horror, the question gives Pylades the opportunity of mentioning a second motive:

Und einer alten Rache tief Gefühl (904).

Whereupon she asks

Und wie beleidigte der König sie ? (905).

I imagine the words to be spoken with surprise. We know what Iphigenie had suffered at Agamemnon's hands; nevertheless, she expresses not a word of rancour—on the contrary, she repeatedly speaks of her father with love and admiration. Is it likely, therefore, that she ever believed her mother would harbour a grievance ?<sup>55</sup> To her dismay she now hears her own history recounted as one of the motives for the crime:

Nach Aulis lockt' er sie und brachte dort,  
Als eine Gottheit sich der Griechen Fahrt  
Mit ungestümen Winden widersetzte,  
Die älteste Tochter, Iphigenien,  
Vor den Altar Dianens, und sie fiel,  
Ein blutig Opfer für der Griechen Heil.  
Dies, sagt man, hat ihr einen Widerwillen  
So tief ins Herz geprägt, daß sie dem Werben  
Agisthens sich ergab und den Gemahl  
Mit Netzen des Verderbens selbst umschlang (908-17).<sup>56</sup>

Pylades speaks of the sacrifice at Aulis as a deed, 'die, *wenn Entschuldigung des Mordes wäre*, sie (Klytämnestra) entschuldigte' (ll. 906-7). Does he mean to infer that there was no possible 'Entschuldigung' for such a crime ? Whatever Pylades' view may have been, there is little doubt that the sacrifice was less a reason, than a pretext, for the crime—an excuse for a wanton life, the continuance of which necessitated the death of the husband. And certainly Iphigenie, who bore no grudge against her father, could view it in no other light: it was, as she said, 'eine Schandtät' inspired by 'eine böse Lust'. The excuse in fact only aggravated the crime. Iphigenie can hear no more, and flees with the words:

Es ist genug ! Du wirst mich wiedersehn (918).<sup>57</sup>



## ACT III, SCENE I: IPHIGENIE, OREST

**A**CT III, in which Orest holds the stage throughout consists of three scenes, and deals with Orest's healing. To the process of healing each of the three scenes contributes its part: in Scene i, which constitutes the greater part of the Act, we have (a) Orest's confession and (b) Iphigenie's influence, first as priestess and later as sister; in Scene ii Orest's descent into the underworld; and in Scene iii Iphigenie's appeal to the Gods, culminating in Orest's final release from the Furies—the 'Achse des Stückes', as Goethe later admitted it to be. These stages, each arising out of, and logically following on, the other, are not of equal importance or intensity: as healing factors they increase in importance; there is a *crescendo* in dramatic intensity, as we approach the climax, while the process itself at once becomes simpler and verges more and more on the supernatural or spiritual. Our discussion of Scene i will consist of an investigation into the two earlier stages of the healing process, and an examination of the manner in which the recognition of brother and sister is brought about, together with the reasons for Orest's increasing pessimism, which leads to his 'Ermattung' and vision in Scene ii.

The Scene opens in a manner reminiscent of Act II, Scene ii: Iphigenie informs the captive that the freedom she confers is a dangerous one:

Unglücklicher, ich löse deine Bande  
Zum Zeichen eines schmerzlichen Geschicks.  
Die Freiheit, die das Heiligtum gewährt,  
Ist, wie der letzte lichte Lebensblick  
Des schwer Erkrankten, Todesbote (926-30).

To Pylades she had expressed the hope that the Gods might avert the calamity which threatens them; she is now more outspoken: she admits to an abhorrence of human sacrifice and a reluctance ever to perform the ceremony:

Noch  
Kann ich es mir und darf es mir nicht sagen,  
Daß ihr verloren seid! Wie könnt' ich euch  
Mit mörderischer Hand dem Tode weihen?  
Und niemand, wer es sei, darf euer Haupt,  
Solang ich Priesterin Dianens bin,  
Berühren (930-6).

Yet she warns him against a false sense of security; for, should she refuse, she will be replaced in her office by one of her

handmaidens:

Doch verweigr' ich jene Pflicht,  
Wie sie der aufgebrachte König fordert,  
So wählt er eine meiner Jungfrau mir  
Zur Folgerin, und ich vermag alsdann  
Mit heißem Wunsch allein euch beizustehn (936-40).

She then addresses him as 'werter Landsmann'. Even the humblest compatriot is welcome in a foreign land<sup>58</sup>; how much more, she declares, are those who remind her of heroes she had once honoured and who revive in her heart a long cherished hope:

Wie soll ich euch genug mit Freud' und Segen  
Empfangen, die ihr mir das Bild der Helden,  
Die ich von Eltern her verehren lernte,  
Entgegenbringt und das innre Herz  
Mit neuer, schöner Hoffnung schmeichelnd labet ! (944-8).

The speech makes several points clear. Pylades has obviously attained his object of winning the priestess' sympathy for his friend, and she has already begun to seek in her mind for some means of averting the tragedy that threatens them. Further, she begins to see in the arrival of the Greeks a hope of her own release. The King had promised her a safe return to Greece, if ever the opportunity should offer itself. Here indeed was the opportunity, though Thoas' untimely decision to resuscitate the rite of human sacrifice now threatens to frustrate her hopes.

Orest is struck by the fact that, though she reveals herself as a friend and compatriot, she refrains from disclosing her identity:

Verbirgst du deinen Namen, deine Herkunft  
Mit klugem Vorsatz ? oder darf ich wissen,  
Wer mir gleich einer Himmlischen begegnet ? (949-51).

To which Iphigenie replies:

Du sollst mich kennen (952).

She does not, as in the former Scene, fall back on her priesthood as an excuse for her silence; she evades his enquiry with a promise. Though her evasion is gentler, her reason is the same: she desires to hear the full history of her family, unbiased by the narrator's knowledge of her identity.<sup>59</sup> As has been mentioned above, there is, too, the essential dramatic necessity that the recognition of brother and sister should be delayed yet awhile, a point we shall discuss later. For the present she begs him to continue the story from the point at which Pylades had broken off, namely, from the murder of Agamemnon by Klytämnestra and Ägisth:

Jetzo sag mir an,  
Was ich nur halb von deinem Bruder hörte,  
Das Ende derer, die, von Troja kehrend,  
Ein hartes, unerwartetes Geschick  
Auf ihrer Wohnung Schwelle stumm empfang.

O, sage mir ! Er fiel, sein Haus betretend,  
Durch seiner Frauen und Ägisthens Tücke ? (952-66).<sup>60</sup>

The fact that Iphigenie refers to Pylades as Orest's brother either passes unnoticed or is perhaps regarded by him as a mere assumption on her part.<sup>61</sup> It is at any rate hardly sufficient to cause him to suspect that she had been misled by Pylades. But it does prove at the outset that she had implicitly accepted Pylades' story as true and that the thought of any connexion between this stranger and her brother has not so far crossed her mind.

To Iphigenie's question concerning the murder of Agamemnon Orest gives a curt reply: 'Du sagst's !' Whereupon she makes a statement of considerable importance:

Weh dir, unseliges Mycen !  
So haben Tantals Enkel Fluch auf Fluch  
Mit vollen, wilden Händen ausgesät !  
Und gleich dem Unkraut, wüste Häupter schüttelnd  
Und tausendfält'gen Samen um sich streuend,  
Den Kindeskindern nahverwandte Mörder  
Zur ew'gen Wechselwut erzeugt ! (967-73).

Exactly how Iphigenie imagines Agamemnon's death to be a consequence of the Tantalus curse, we are not told. Apart from his crime of sacrificing his daughter, Agamemnon had led an honourable life. Nevertheless, he had become guilty; that the Gods had willed his crime, does not alter that fact. Iphigenie accepts without question both the circumstances and the inevitable punishment—just as later she accepts the fact that the Gods had likewise forced guilt and consequent punishment upon Orest. If, on the other hand, Agamemnon had refused to comply with the will of the Gods, his crime, disobedience, would have been even greater. Thus he was inevitably destined to become guilty. Iphigenie might have accused the Gods of injustice or inconsistency, but she does not do so. To her their will and their wisdom are not things to be questioned, but to be obeyed and venerated; the curse, if the Gods do not decree otherwise, is unchanging, and she regards Agamemnon's death as yet another of its consequences. Thus, even now, while she still reels under the moral shock inflicted by the news of her father's murder by her mother, she makes no complaint against

the Gods; she does not even attempt to explain or justify their inscrutable ways to herself.

Nevertheless, there is an unusual vagueness in this statement of Iphigenie's: she does not define the exact relationship of Agamemnon with his 'nahverwandte Mörder'. In the history of her family (which she relates to Thoas in Act I, Scene iii) it is clear that each atrocity was, in its turn, vengeance for a former crime, and each was perpetrated by a Tantalid. How does this murder, committed by a wife and her lover, fit into the scheme of things? In the Greek fable Aegisthus was the son of Thyestes, two of whose sons were killed by Atreus; the two youths, whose flesh Atreus had set before their father as a meal (Il. 380 ff.), were therefore Aegisthus' brothers. That he should avenge this deed on Agamemnon, Atreus' eldest son, was in conformity with the usual working of the curse. Goethe, however, does not mention this relationship. His reason, it seems to me, was the same as that which inspired him to deprive Klytämnestra of her excuse for revenge, namely, to augment the enormity of the crime and the murderers' guilt. If Goethe had definitely stated that Aegisthus was a Tantalid with a grievance to avenge, then his share in the murder, would have had a real justification.<sup>62</sup> This fact would to some extent have relieved Klytämnestra of blame, and would have deprived Iphigenie of grounds for condemning her mother so entirely. On the other hand, it was undesirable to have a complete break in the continuity of the curse—its machinations must be conceived as active right down to the present generation of Tantalids—otherwise we should have the anomaly of Orest's being compelled by the curse to avenge a crime which had no real connexion with it and of Iphigenie's expiating a curse which already showed signs of becoming extinct of its own accord. Goethe's task, therefore, was to bring the murder of Agamemnon into line with former murders committed under the curse's influence, and at the same time to deprive the perpetrators as far as possible of extenuating circumstances. The latter could be achieved provided he did not unduly stress the former. Thus in alluding almost in passing to the 'nahverwandte Mörder', Iphigenie only vaguely indicates that the murder has indeed a connexion with the curse; apart from this, the impression the reader carries away is that the murderers were inspired chiefly by mean and selfish motives.<sup>63</sup>

Iphigenie appeals to Orest to reveal to her what 'die Finsternis des Schreckens' had deprived her of his 'brother's' story. She asks:

Wie ist des großen Stammes letzter Sohn,  
Das holde Kind, bestimmt des Vaters Rächer

Dereinst zu sein, wie ist Orest dem Tage  
Des Bluts entgangen ? (976-9).

These words are among the most significant and illuminating that Iphigenie speaks. We have already pointed out her condemnation of Klytämnestra's deed, and here she categorically states that, not only was it a crime which had to be avenged, Orest, 'des großen Stammes letzter Sohn', was destined to be the instrument of vengeance. This is, of course, not a modern conception of things, though it is certainly an integral part of the fable.<sup>64</sup> But the result is a clash between subject matter and ethics; for this Greek priestess, who belongs to a culture of over two thousand years ago and at times, as here, shows traces of the most violent characteristics of the Tantalids, comes forward elsewhere as a disciple of eighteenth century enlightenment, as an exponent of 'reine Menschlichkeit', and the mouthpiece of Goethe's own idealism. But, we may ask, is our own civilization so purely and ideally twentieth century as we sometimes like to imagine ? Does it not reveal admixtures of many ages, races and creeds ? Does this fact not account to some extent for many of the contrasts and clashes both in our environment and in ourselves ? Why, then, should we demand of Iphigenie a consistency which does not in reality exist ? Her conceptions, like our own, like those of every generation, are paradoxical. Yet we might well question Goethe's wisdom in choosing a Greek theme as a vehicle for modern thought. Goethe's defence, it seems to me, is that the ethics were of only secondary importance; he was in the first place an artist and a poet, and never dramatized a subject for the sake of the ideology or the moral it was capable of expounding, but because he saw in it suitable material for a poetic work. The 'Idee' grew spontaneously out of the subject. That Iphigenie should cling to her old Tantalid conception of the inevitable continuance of the family feud, was as unavoidable for Goethe's plan as it was necessary that she should be able to forgive Orest; she cannot do the latter, unless she holds with the former. That this same Tantalid who regards murder under certain circumstances as right and necessary, should recoil from a deception which promises to save the life of her brother, may also seem inconsistent. But this again is only the clash between what had been retained of the original legend and the more idealistic views of the eighteenth century poet. The clash was unavoidable; but it is one which is inherent in every literary work that deals with a subject belonging to an earlier age or to a culture which is foreign to the poet. We can hardly claim, for example, that *Julius Caesar*, *Wallenstein*, *Götz von Berlichingen*, *Judith*, *Herodes und Mariamne* and the rest are either representa-

tive wholly of the ages in which their heroes lived or of the age of the poet who dramatized their stories. In some the clash between the original subject and the new conceptions foisted upon the characters by the modern dramatist may be less pronounced than in our play; but it is there nevertheless, and could only have been eliminated by a complete modernization of the themes, a process which would be as undesirable as the result would have been inartistic. *Iphigenie* is merely an extreme case: here we have a pagan subject imbued with modern ethics, and a Tantalid as heroine who is an image of St. Agatha. The truth is that Iphigenie does not, and never could, exist: she is not true to life. Her religious beliefs we can easily accept, for, though paradoxical, they are not dissimilar to our own. But in addition to this Goethe asks us to imagine a Greek—one who still clings to the most primitive, pagan superstitions—as an apostle of an idealism to which our civilization has not yet attained. If we are unable to do so the fault is not necessarily Goethe's. The only valid question, it seems to me, is whether, in thus taxing his reader's imagination by a combination of extremes, Goethe has not made undue demands on the reader's imagination, thus detracting from his aesthetic enjoyment of the poem. It is, no doubt, a question which will ever find varying answers. The fact that there are readers whose enjoyment is not diminished by the clash, shows that the extremes are not, poetically at any rate, irreconcilable. But for those who find the extremes jarring—and there are no doubt many—it must appear that Goethe has failed to harmonize them sufficiently. It would, I think, be vain to try to assess either the measure of the poet's failure or the reader's shortcomings in what is, after all, an artistic interchange.

The importance which Iphigenie attaches to Orest's well-being—incidentally also to the vengeance he was destined to wreak—is revealed by her next question (Elektra's name seems to be added as an afterthought):

Hat ein gleich Geschick  
Mit des Avernus Netzen ihn umschlungen?  
Ist er gerettet? Lebt er? Lebt Elektra? (979-81).

On Orest's replying: 'Sie leben', she breaks into a pæan of joy:

Goldne Sonne, leihe mir  
Die schönsten Strahlen, lege sie zum Dank  
Vor Jovis Thron! denn ich bin arm und stumm (982-4).

Apparently there is nothing more she can wish for: though Agamemnon is dead, her brother and sister still live. Her attitude to her mother, too, is revealed with ever greater clarity. Orest warns her that if she has any bonds of intimacy with this

house, she should restrain her joy; for she may experience a relapse. He notes that she has learnt only of Agamemnon's death; to which she retorts:

Hab' ich an dieser Nachricht nicht genug ? (992).

It might seem as if Iphigenie recoils from the thought of further atrocities. This, of course, is not the exact meaning of her words: she is happy with the news that Orest and Elektra are still alive, and nothing else matters. For when Orest remarks:

Du hast des Greuels Hälfte nur erfahren (993),

she replies:

Was fürcht' ich noch ? Orest, Elektra leben (994).

Again Orest shows his anxiety:

Und fürchtest du für Klytämnestren nichts ? (995).

Still Iphigenie is unmoved: neither hope nor fear, she states, can save Klytämnestra, who must take her due punishment:

Sie rettet weder Hoffnung, weder Furcht (996).

At last Orest discloses that she, too, is dead:

Auch schied sie aus dem Land der Hoffnung ab (997).

Even this does not surprise Iphigenie. She is neither indifferent nor callous regarding her mother's fate: her death, was a fore-gone conclusion by the law of the curse. Her only concern is the manner of her death:

Vergoß sie reuig wütend selbst ihr Blut ? (998).

In other words, did she commit suicide ? If so, Orest would be relieved of his otherwise unavoidable task; for his first duty was to his father, his 'real' parent.<sup>65</sup> This hope, however, is short-lived:

Nein ! doch ihr eigen Blut gab ihr den Tod (999).

Iphigenie's next speech:

Sprich deutlicher, daß ich nicht länger sinne !

Die Ungewißheit schlägt mir tausendfältig

Die dunkeln Schwingen um das bange Haupt (1000-2),

serves a double purpose: it compels Orest to relate the story of his crime—his great confession begins at this point—and it reveals her attitude to what she is about to hear. She had hoped that Klytämnestra would make Orest's deed unnecessary; now she hopes to hear that it has been performed. But the confirmation of her hopes is also dreaded, for it not only implies the death of her guilty mother, but also a terrible crime upon the conscience of her brother; and she braces herself to receive news which, however dreaded, is preferable to her present 'Unge-  
wißheit'.

Orest begins. He would gladly have concealed his awful crime, but he is compelled to confess to her:

So haben mich die Götter ausersehn  
Zum Boten einer Tat, die ich so gern  
Ins klanglos-dumpfe Höhlenreich der Nacht  
Verbergen möchte? Wider meinen Willen  
Zwingt mich dein holder Mund. (1003-7).

He relates that Orest—throughout this story he speaks of himself in the third person—had been concealed by Elektra on the day of their father's murder and sent to a place of safety, the house of Strophius, 'des Vaters Schwäher' (l. 1011), where he grew up with the latter's son, Pylades. United by the bonds of blood and friendship—it should be noted that Pylades' allusion to Orest as his 'Bruder' is not too far from the truth<sup>68</sup>—they harboured thoughts of vengeance. Disguised as strangers, he relates, they came to Mycene, pretending to bring with them the ashes of the deceased Orest. He recognised Elektra, who inflamed anew his desire for vengeance which, in a mother's presence, had grown faint:

Elektra gibt Orest sich zu erkennen;  
Sie bläst der Rache Feuer in ihm auf,  
Das in der Mutter heil'ger Gegenwart  
In sich zurückgebrannt war (1022-5).<sup>67</sup>

She led him to the place where their father had died, and pointed out an old stain of blood which could not be erased from the floor; with fiery tongue she described the atrocious crime, her own miserable life, the arrogance of the traitors, and the danger which still threatened them from a 'stiefgewordene Mutter'. And, finally, Orest states:

Hier drang sie jenen alten Dolch ihm auf,  
Der schon in Tantals Hause grimmig wütete,  
Und Klytämnestra fiel durch Sohnes Hand (1036-8).

The deed concerning which Iphigenie longed for certainty, and yet from which her whole nature recoiled, had indeed come to pass.<sup>68</sup> Orest had murdered his mother. The pity of it was that it should have been necessary at all.<sup>69</sup> Again she feels herself doubly unhappy in her banishment: has Diana, she asks, only placed her in the safe retreat of the temple, so that she should experience her family's misfortunes the more keenly?

Unsterbliche, die ihr den reinen Tag  
Auf immer neuen Wolken selig lebet,  
Habt ihr nur darum mich so manches Jahr  
Von Menschen abgesondert, mich so nah  
Bei euch gehalten, mir die kindliche  
Beschäftigung, des heil'gen Feuers Glut



Zu nähren, aufgetragen, meine Seele  
 Der Flamme gleich in ew'ger, frommer Klarheit  
 Zu euern Wohnungen hinaufgezogen,  
 Daß ich nur meines Hauses Greuel später  
 Und tiefer fühlen sollte! (1039-49).

Let us not misunderstand Iphigenie. Her words do not indicate doubts on her part. In her heart she does not believe for a moment that Diana had brought her to Tauris in order to administer refined torture; but she does remind the Goddess that the blows, which now fall swift and fast, are more cruel than would have been the case, had she lived at home and faced each tragedy singly and in its turn.<sup>70</sup> Nor are the tragedies ended, as she well knows. There is still Orest's fate, and she again braces herself for the story of his punishment:

Sage mir

Vom Unglücksel'gen, sprich mir von Orest! (1049-50).

After again expressing the wish that he were dead, Orest tells of the curse laid upon him by his mother's spirit: since there was not a Tantalid who could avenge her—both Elektra and Pylades were lined up with Orest against her—Klytämnestra was, we may assume, compelled to call upon the Furies:

Wie gärend stieg aus der Erschlagenen Blut  
 Der Mutter Geist

Und ruft der Nacht uralten Töchtern zu:

„Laßt nicht den Muttermörder entfliehn!

Verfolgt den Verbrecher! Euch ist er geweiht!“ (1052-6).

They obey. What is worse, they are supported by their companions, 'der Zweifel and die Reue'.<sup>71</sup> Here, then, we have from Orest's own lips what we have already pointed out as the essential difference between him and the earlier perpetrators of Tantalid crimes: in spite of the fact that it was his fate and his duty to avenge his father, he is now assailed by remorse for his deed and by doubts as to its rightness. The fact that both his doubts and his remorse would have been correspondingly greater, had he refused to avenge his father, does not enter into his considerations.<sup>72</sup>

Not a word of reproach or rebuke comes from Iphigenie. Nor should we expect any, since, in her view, Orest, who was 'bestimmt des Vaters Rächer dereinst zu sein', had only performed a duty which Klytämnestra, by her failure to take her own life, had forced upon him.<sup>73</sup> But as she realizes, he had done so at the cost of his happiness. She is struck by the similarity of his plight with that of the young stranger before her, who, according to Pylades, was pursued by the Furies in consequence of a 'Brudermord'. Her heart goes out to both, and

she speaks the 'gutes, holdes Wort', for which Pylades had pleaded (l. 848):

Unseliger, du bist in gleichem Fall  
Und fühlst, was er, der arme Flüchtling, leidet! (1071-2).

The importance of these lines is that they fix once and for all her attitude to Orest's crime. In her immediate reply to his statement that 'Klytämnestra fiel durch Sohnes Hand', she referred to Orest as 'der Unglückselige (l. 1050); now he is 'der arme Flüchtling' who, like the 'Unseliger' before her, seeks release from his pangs of conscience. Orest, who knows nothing of Pylades' tale, is naturally mystified:

Was sagst du mir? was wähnst du gleichen Fall? (1073).

Iphigenie, it would almost seem, has allowed her sympathy for the stranger and her sorrow at her brother's fate to override for a moment her discretion; but this is not altogether true. In drawing the analogy between their respective fates, she only complied with Pylades' request. She had accepted the tale of a fratricide as true, and the possibility of any connexion between the two men naturally never enters her mind: she is therefore quite unaware that her remark would sound irrelevant to Orest. But she has gone too far; he demands an explanation, and she replies:

Dich drückt ein Brudermord wie jenen; mir  
Vertraute dies dein jüngster Bruder schon (1074-5).

It is at once clear to Orest that his friend has deceived the priestess: he has obviously not merely withheld, but even falsified, their identity, and given an altogether misleading version of the crime. He recognizes, too, that in doing so Pylades had no doubt hoped to facilitate their escape from Tauris. But Orest will have none of it. He refuses to have her deceived; he confesses that he himself is Orest; and far from accepting an escape accomplished by such means, his only wish is to die:

Ich kann nicht leiden, daß du, große Seele,  
Mit einem falschen Wort betrogen werdest.  
Ein lügenhaft Gewebe knüpft' ein Fremder  
Dem Fremden, sinnreich und der List gewohnt,  
Zur Falle vor die Füße; zwischen uns  
Sei Wahrheit!  
Ich bin Orest! und dieses schuld'ge Haupt  
Senkt nach der Grube sich und sucht den Tod (1076-83).

Though he has no wish to save himself, he hopes that a way of escape may be found for his friend and the priestess:

Wer du auch seist, so wünsch' ich Rettung dir  
Und meinem Freunde; mir wünsch' ich sie nicht.

Du scheinst hier wider Willen zu verweilen;  
 Erfindet Rat zur Flucht und laßt mich hier! (1085-8).

By what means he has discovered Iphigenie's longing for home, we are not told; her words—as, for example, those in the opening of this or of the preceding Scene—were hardly calculated to inform either him or Pylades. Are we perhaps to infer that Orest felt that all was not well with this Greek priestess in a barbarian land? Or was it the premonition of a sensitive soul that she, too, must return, before all could be well? At any rate he expresses just what she had so long and so ardently desired:

Geht ihr, daheim im schönen Griechenland  
 Ein neues Leben freundlich anzufangen! (1092-3).<sup>74</sup>

Here we reach a dividing line in the Scene—there are two distinct sections—and we may review the situation so far. We have already noted that, as a result of Iphigenie's refusal to reveal her identity to the Greeks on the one hand and Pylades' deception of Iphigenie on the other, brother and sister meet and remain for a while unknown to each other. Under these circumstances Orest makes his confession as to a stranger, compelled by some force he knows not what: thus Iphigenie's sympathy for the stranger cannot but appear genuine. Orest's confession and Iphigenie's reaction to it may be regarded as the first stages in the process of healing. His narrative causes him to re-live his terrible experience; but he now sees his crime through eyes that are unclouded and untroubled by the Furies, and, by having the regrets and doubts which torture him brought to the light of day, he is made to view them with a quieter conscience. In confessing he exposes himself to some kind of verdict, which, we may assume, he is prepared to accept. The priestess pronounces his acquittal. The reasons she gives are unambiguous and convincing: Firstly, she declares that Klytämnestra, by refusing to take her own life, bore the initial and primary guilt. Secondly, since vengeance was an unavoidable necessity, Orest had no choice but to commit a crime which, in fact, was a duty. Thirdly she pities him, but she also welcomes and rejoices in his subsequent remorse—as she just as certainly would have condemned the absence of it—for not only does it bring salvation within his reach (this point is emphasized later in the Scene), but it distinguishes him from his forbears, thus providing the first condition necessary for the expiation of the curse. This complete acquittal, pronounced by an unknown priestess, cannot fail to make an impression on his mind. He regards her as 'gleich einer Himmlischen', as 'eine große Seele', and later as 'eine Heilige'; while she, for her part, has emphasized her long severance from

the world and, in consequence her greater abhorrence of evil. Yet it is this 'reine Seele' who pities him as a victim of circumstance. An immediate effect is not, of course, apparent; there is, in fact, no sign of healing till each of the other factors has been brought into play. Orest's recital of his crime and the description of his thoughts, desires and emotions, together with Iphigenie's clarification of the situation, are nothing more than an application of the principles of psycho-analysis as a healing science. It is certainly significant that, before the science as such was evolved, Goethe should have given such a description of its working. But everything is not explained by psychiatry alone; it is more than that. Orest, it seems to me, obtains from Iphigenie something of the comfort and renewed confidence which those who believe in religious confession and absolution of sin receive from their priest. His confession in some mysterious way relieves him of part of his load of guilt, and her acquittal alleviates his pangs of conscience.

The reader will no doubt have noticed that in his narrative of his crime Orest makes no mention of Ägisth, who was, after all, the real murderer of Agamemnon (ll. 897-900). Are we to understand that Orest had killed Ägisth too, but that this lesser crime was relegated to a place of minor importance in his mind? We can hardly believe that Ägisth escaped his just punishment. Nor can we assume that Goethe evaded without good reason an issue which is of considerable importance in the Greek tragedies. In Sophocles' *Electra*, with which Goethe's play has more than a chance resemblance, news of Orestes' supposed death is brought to Clytemnestra by an old tutor, after which the two friends arrive, disguised, and pretending to bring his ashes. Orest reveals himself to Electra, who complains of her unhappy life. He enters the house, from which cries are heard: 'Oh son, have pity on your mother'. Aegisthus, delighted at the news of Orestes' death, arrives upon the scene; but, after being shown the body of Clytemnestra, he is forced by Orestes into the house, so that he, too, may die where Agamemnon was murdered. Aeschylus, on the other hand, relates that Orestes, after disclosing his identity to Electra and finding a way to the presence of his mother, murders first Aegisthus and then Clytemnestra. Why did Goethe ignore this point? The first reason, perhaps, is that it is not strictly germane to his plot, and he was always careful to introduce only those events of the 'Vorgeschichte' which were indispensable. More important, however, it would have marred the full focusing of attention on the crime that matters, namely, the matricide, thus introducing a kind of diversion into what is now a clear-cut issue. As a result of the matricide Goethe's

Orest feels 'Zweifel und Reue': it is doubtful if he would have felt much of either for the murder of Ægisth. How, we might then ask, would it have stood with regard to the question of his forgiveness? Would he not have forfeited his right to it? And would Iphigenie have been altogether justified in extending her sympathy to an unrepentant and recalcitrant brother? These are questions which would have arisen and which would have demanded an answer, if Goethe had introduced the subject. Its avoidance is, perhaps, a minor blemish—the thoughtful reader, who has been informed of the important part played by Ægisth in the murder of Agamemnon, cannot but wonder what was his fate—but the blemish is trifling compared with the problems in the plot and the inconsistencies in the characters which its introduction would inevitably have involved. As it is, we may assume that Ægisth, too, has suffered the just penalty for his crime, but under what circumstances and by whose hand—whether, indeed, it may not have been Pylades' share in the 'große Tat' of which he speaks—we are not told.

For a moment Orest withdraws, giving Iphigenie an opportunity to sum up, in a short monologue, the position as it affects her. We are at once struck by the absence of any reference on her part to the tragic history she has just heard: there is no further condemnation of her mother, no lament for her unfortunate brother. Instead, her gaze is turned to the future, joyfully and with hope. The monologue, like all her emotional utterances, is addressed to the Gods. The fulfilment of her desire seems to be drawing near; as one knows a king by his magnanimity, she states,

so kennt  
Man euch, ihr Götter, an gesparten, lang'  
Und weise zubereiteten Geschenken.  
Denn ihr allein wißt, was uns frommen kann (1102-5).

She reminds the Gods, too, in an indirect way, that, however intense her longing may have been, she had never been impatient:

Gelassen hört  
Ihr unser Flehn, das um Beschleunigung  
Euch kindisch bittet; aber eure Hand  
Bricht unreif nie die goldnen Himmelsfrüchte;  
Und wehe dem, der, ungeduldig sie  
Ertrotzend, saure Speise sich zum Tod  
Genießt (1108-14).

And she ends with an appeal that this happiness may not slip past her:

O, laßt das lang erwartete,

Noch kaum gedachte Glück nicht, wie den Schatten  
Des abgeschiednen Freundes, eitel mir  
Und dreifach schmerzlicher vorübergehn ! (1114-7).

It is the prayer of her first monologue again:

So gieb auch mich den Meinen endlich wieder  
Und rette mich, die du vom Tod errettet,  
Auch von dem Leben hier, dem zweiten Tode ! (51-3).

But it has greater intensity; for if the hope which is now held out to her should be frustrated, it would almost certainly imply not only the death of her new-found brother, but also unending exile for herself in Tauris, which, with the complete failure of her mission, would be all the harder to bear.

The remainder of the scene deals with Orest's recognition of Iphigenie as his sister and is the action which brings about his 'Ermattung'. Returning to find the priestess in an attitude of prayer, he tells her to appeal to the Gods for herself and his friend, but to exclude him, for there is no hope for such a criminal; here again we have that strange insistence in her returning to Greece with Pylades:

Rufst du die Götter an für dich und Pylades,  
So nenne meinen Namen nicht mit euerm !  
Du retttest den Verbrecher nicht, zu dem  
Du dich gesellst, und teilest Fluch und Not (1118-21).

Iphigenie's reply is at once characteristic and significant:

Mein Schicksal ist an deines fest gebunden (1122).

Her fate is not only bound up with his as with a brother's; she is convinced that her life's happiness depends upon his release from the Furies and his safe return home, and no doubt she feels, too, in a subconscious way, that she must return with him. But Orest's only wish is to atone for his crime by death:

Mit nichts ! Laß allein und unbegleitet  
Mich zu den Toten gehn ! (1123-4).

He gives a description of the Furies, from whom, he declares, she cannot save him. Though they do not dare to enter the holy grove, he hears their horrible laughter from afar, and he compares himself to a traveller who has sought shelter in a tree, round which wolves lie in wait; but once he leaves the grove, the Furies will rise up, shaking their snake-covered heads, and drive their victim before them.<sup>75</sup>

All this is too much for Iphigenie; she can conceal her identity no longer, and appeals:

Kannst du, Orest, ein freundlich Wort vernehmen ? (1139);

to which Orest replies:

Spar es für einen Freund der Götter auf ! (1140).

Iphigenie's unquenchable faith in the Gods is again revealed in her next remark:

Sie geben dir zu neuer Hoffnung Licht (1141).

Even under such circumstances she finds grounds for hope: but she is not content to stand idly by and wait for the Gods to fulfil her hopes. With the knowledge that it is Orest, her brother, who stands before her, her whole attitude changes: she has now a service to perform. While formerly her chief concern had been to learn the history of her family, she now seeks to give definite voice to her pity and sympathy. The Furies are not evil in themselves—Iphigenie would be the last to condemn the pangs of conscience—but they must not be allowed to distort man's reason or outlook. Their mission is not merely to punish, but, through punishment, to bring erring men back to the right path. It is Iphigenie's task to turn the Erinyes into Eumenides.<sup>76</sup> For such a task a sister's love is more effective than the verdict of a priestess, however just and holy. Iphigenie's disclosure of her identity at this particular moment, though natural enough, is inspired by this aim; for her 'freundlich Wort' is not only the news that she is his sister, but also all that this fact implies, namely, that she, no less a child of Klytämnestra, pities the unwilling murderer of her mother and hopes to bring peace to his soul. Her love and pity, she believes, can offset Klytämnestra's hatred and revenge: a pure sister's blessing can cancel the curse of a wicked mother. There are other powers besides those of evil, and it is her task, as sister, to revive his faith in them and to inspire him with new hope and courage. But, with Orest in his present mood, she must proceed slowly; she asks:

Hast du Elektren, *eine* Schwester nur? (1144).

Elektra was the only sister he had ever known; for 'der Liebling (der) zwischen beiden Schwestern wuchs', as Iphigenie describes him (ll. 411-2), was too young to remember his elder sister when she departed for Aulis. This he now relates:

Die *eine* kannt' ich; doch die älteste nahm  
Ihr gut Geschick, das uns so schrecklich schien,  
Beizeiten aus dem Elend unsres Hauses (1145-7).

In a remarkable passage he then appeals to her to desist, for her questions re-open old wounds and she thereby associates herself with the Furies. He ends by exclaiming:

Soll die Glut denn ewig,  
Vorsätzlich angefacht, mit Höllenschwefel  
Genährt, mir auf der Seele marternd brennen? (1153-5).

It is the question which Iphigenie, too, is soon to ask herself:

Soll dieser Fluch denn ewig walten ? Soll  
Nie dies Geschlecht mit einem neuen Segen  
Sich wieder heben ? (1694-6).

Why Iphigenie's question regarding 'die *eine* Schwester' should have such painful effects may be easily surmised. Orest is reminded of those far-off days when his family was united and happy, and the terrible contrast between then and now—the contrast, too, between his youthful innocence and his present guilt—is vividly brought home to him. Is there, he naturally wonders, no return to those happier conditions, no escape from the awful curse ?<sup>77</sup>

It is not Iphigenie's intention to torment, but to comfort him:

Ich bringe süßes Rauchwerk in die Flamme.  
O, laß den reinen Hauch der Liebe dir  
Die Glut des Busens leise wehend kühlen ! (1156-8).

If he is still capable of hearing her, if the Furies have not dried up the blood in his veins and the head of Medusa has not turned him to stone, then surely her message that good can overcome evil, that a blessing can cancel a curse, will reach him:

O, wenn vergoßnen Mutterblutes Stimme  
Zur Höll' hinab mit dumpfen Tönen ruft,  
Soll nicht der reinen Schwester Segenswort  
Hülfreiche Götter vom Olympus rufen ? (1164-7).

But her words only excite him the more: he sees in her an avenging Goddess and even her voice moves him deeply. He inquires:

Wer bist du, deren Stimme mir entsetzlich  
Das Innerste in seinen Tiefen wendet ? (1170-1).<sup>78</sup>

Iphigenie knows that his innermost heart tells him she is his sister:

Es zeigt sich dir im tiefsten Herzen an.  
Orest ! Ich bin's ! Sieh Iphigenien !  
Ich lebe ! (1172-4).

For a moment Orest is taken aback by the revelation. 'Du'! he exclaims; to which Iphigenie answers: 'Mein Bruder !' But a moment later he is again incredulous; that he should find his sister, whom he believed to be dead, in the priestess of a foreign land, seems to him too improbable. 'Laß ! Hinweg !' he exclaims. And once again he expresses the conviction that death alone can give him release:

Laß mich ! Wie Herkules will ich, Unwürd'ger,  
Den Tod voll Schmach, in mich verschlossen, sterben (1178-9).

Iphigenie finds it no easy task to convince Orest. For the next



forty lines he persists in disbelieving her, in spite of her assurances of her love and of her joy at finding a long-lost brother; he even accuses her—'eine schöne Nymphe', as he calls her—of wiles which Diana would have reason to punish as a desecration of her sanctuary. We are at once struck by Goethe's far-reaching changes in this part of the fable and by his adaptation of the recognition and incredulity *motifs*. The letter incident, which in Euripides is instrumental in bringing about the recognition, is dispensed with by Goethe altogether: it became unnecessary by the transference of Iphigenia's role to Orest. In giving Pylades the letter, Euripides' Iphigenia discloses its contents, in order to circumvent possible accidents:

*Iphigenia*. You will go to Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, and say to him: 'Iphigenia, who was thought to be sacrificed at Aulis and to be dead, sends this message to you'.

*Orestes*. Where is she? Has she come back to life from the world of the dead?

*Iphigenia* (to Orestes). She it is who speaks to you. Do not confuse me by interrupting. (To Pylades) You will say to him: 'She sends this message to you, "Brother, bring me back to Argos from the barbarian land before I die, and free me from the service of the Goddess, to whom I must offer sacrifices of men" . . . Tell him that the Goddess Artemis saved me from the sword of the priest, that a doe was slain in my place, and that I was brought here.' That is the substance of my letter.

*Pylades*. You, who have sworn so fairly to save me, have bound me by an oath easy of fulfilment. Behold, I will accomplish my duty. (To Orestes) Orestes, I bear and deliver to you a letter from your sister.

*Orestes*. And I accept it. I will not break the seal yet, nor show my pleasure in mere words. O dearest sister, I am dumb with wonder. Holding you in my arms, I cannot doubt the marvel, and move towards joy.

Euripides' Iphigenia is not to be convinced so easily: she obviously suspects a ruse by which the two strangers hope to use her for their own ends. She therefore requires some assurances, and it is only when she has satisfied herself by certain questions regarding their past lives that she accepts him as her brother. There then follow Orestes' account of the terrible events which have since taken place at home, his statement regarding the oracle of Phoebus Apollo which has brought him and Pylades to the Tauric Chersonese, and his proposal to kill Thoas in order to facilitate the theft of the image. Iphigenia then evolves her more 'feasible plan.'

In the Greek play Iphigenia's incredulity serves no dramatic end: it is natural enough and histrionically effective—which is, no doubt, sufficient excuse for its inclusion—but it is short-lived and easily dispelled, after which Euripides returns to the real business of the scene. In Goethe's version the incredulity *motif* has gained inner meaning and a real dramatic purpose. The characters, too, have been deepened and ennobled. Iphigenie, who is to wipe out the curse by her purity, does not evolve the plan of deceit and theft: it is transferred to Pylades—the only one of Goethe's characters who retains some of the cunning propensities of the original Greeks. The nearest Orest comes to the thought of killing the King is in the impetuous drawing of his sword for defensive combat in Act V, an action which helps to convince Thoas of his noble descent. The recognition itself is moved from the early part of the play—in Euripides it is little more than a necessary preliminary—to the third Act, the 'Achse des Stückes', where it plays an important part in the healing process of Orest. In Goethe's version it is Orest who first discloses his identity, and in doing so he is motivated by a desire to disillusion the priestess, who, he perceives, has been deceived by his friend. The incredulity, naturally associated with the characters who reveal their identity first, is transferred to Orest. Iphigenie is thus given an opportunity of revealing her love for her brother—as Orestes to a lesser extent expresses his love for his sister in Euripides—but whereas Goethe's Orest stands in dire need of such sentiments, the most that can be said of the Greek Iphigenia is that they were probably welcome. The great advance in Goethe's version, however, is that Orest's incredulity now serves a definite end in the development of the plot. In order to convince him Iphigenie, when all else fails, is compelled to make her blunt statement regarding the peril in which they find themselves, after which Orest has no further doubts. The realization of their position throws Orest into that state of despair and pessimism which brings about his 'Ermattung'. Thus the 'Ermattung'—a Scene which is unknown in the Greek versions, but without which we cannot conceive of the complete cure of Goethe's Orest—is a natural consequence of the preceding chain of events, in which Orest's incredulity is a vital link. It is now no mere disjointed incident, but an indispensable part of the whole.

In the conversation in which Iphigenie seeks to convince Orest of the truth of her words, there are a few minor points of interest. To Orest's repeated assertion that he must die, Iphigenie replies:

Du wirst nicht untergehn ! (1180).

The words again reveal her subconscious conviction, which runs through the whole work, that all will yet be well. Nevertheless, it is necessary for Orest to be made to realize their peril. And she appeals to him:

O, daß ich nur  
Ein ruhig Wort von dir vernehmen könnte!  
O, löse meine Zweifel, laß des Glückes,  
Des lang ersehnten, mich auch sicher werden! (1180-3).

It is not difficult to imagine what the 'Zweifel' and the 'Glück', of which she speaks, are. Convinced in her heart that Orest would not 'go under', she believes that Diana will at last hear her prayers: she will yet allow her to return to Greece. The arrival of Orest is the first sign of her prayers' fulfilment and of her approaching 'Glück'. But his present condition and his truculent mood fill her with 'Zweifel'. Hence the interchange of joy and suffering in her soul:

Es wälzet sich ein Rad von Freud' und Schmerz  
Durch meine Seele (1184-5).

One might, of course, ask why she does not turn to Pylades, who is undoubtedly in full possession of his senses—she does so later, when, on the first signs of Orest's 'Ermattung', she can bear up no longer—and to our question she herself gives the answer:

Von dem fremden Manne  
Entfernet mich ein Schauer; doch es reißt  
Mein Innerstes gewaltig mich zum Bruder (1185-7).<sup>79</sup>

To Orest's unkind retort:

Ist hier Lyäens Tempel? und ergreift  
Unbändig heil'ge Wut die Priesterin? (1188-9).

Iphigenie declares her love for her brother and her joy in finding him:

O, höre mich! O, sieh mich an, wie mir  
Nach einer langen Zeit das Herz sich öffnet  
Der Seligkeit, dem Liebsten, was die Welt  
Noch für mich tragen kann, das Haupt zu küssen,  
Mit meinen Armen, die den leeren Winden  
Nur ausgebreitet waren, dich zu fassen!

Orest! Orest! mein Bruder! (1190-1201).

But Orest is unconvinced. She can bestow her favours on his friend, he states, but she should spare him. Undaunted by the rebuff, she appeals once again:

Fasse  
Dich, Bruder, und erkenne die Gefundene!  
Schilt einer Schwester reine Himmelsfreude  
Nicht unbesonnene, strafbare Lust! (1211-4).

And, as is her wont in moments of stress, she appeals to the Gods:

O, nehmt den Wahn ihm von dem starren Auge,  
Daß uns der Augenblick der höchsten Freude  
Nicht dreifach elend mache! (1215-7).

Finally, by a blunt, concise, almost impatient, statement regarding the situation in which they find themselves—it is a masterpiece of brevity—she seeks to open his eyes to the truth:

Sie ist hier,  
Die längst verlorne Schwester. Vom Altar  
Riß mich die Göttin weg und rettete  
Hierher mich in ihr eigen Heiligtum.  
Gefangen bist du, dargestellt zum Opfer,  
Und findest in der Priesterin die Schwester (1217-22).

Her appeals and protestations of love had failed, but these words succeed: they are effective beyond all expectation. What is the reason? She begins by emphasizing once again that she is 'die längst verlorene Schwester'; she takes for granted a fact of which he was well aware, but which a strange priestess in a distant land was hardly likely to know, namely, that his sister had been lured to Aulis and there placed on the altar as a sacrifice to Diana. Instead, she informs him of a fact which he did not know, but which he obviously accepts at once as a possibility, namely, that the Goddess had saved her and brought her to her sanctuary at Tauris. Her final words leave no doubt in his mind concerning the truth of her statement; he is about to be sacrificed, she declares, and finds, in the priestess who is to perform the ceremony, his own sister.<sup>80</sup>

Orest's immediate acceptance of Iphigenie's statement was preconditioned by his conviction that he must die and by his belief that Apollo's oracle was nothing more than a decoy luring him to his end. Her words not only go to strengthen this belief, but they also indicate the manner in which the Gods intend to effect his death. Could anything be more fitting than that they, in their insatiable hatred of the house of Tantalus, should have saved his sister from the altar at Aulis, so that she should now administer his punishment? It is so in keeping with the cruel nature of the curse, that he not only accepts her as his sister, but also at once resigns himself to the last and greatest tragedy of their race:

Unselige! So mag die Sonne denn  
Die letzten Greuel unsres Hauses sehn! (1223-4).

Only Elektra's presence is needed to make the tragedy complete:

Ist nicht Elektra hier, damit auch sie  
Mit uns zu Grunde gehe, nicht ihr Leben  
Zu schwererem Geschick und Leiden friste ? (1225-7).

It is not without bitterness towards the Gods, that he accepts his fate. He comforts himself that, at any rate, he dies without off-spring; and so the curse will end with his death and the extinction of their race. The thought is a mere intensification of that expressed in Act II, Scene ii:

Und nun erfüllet sich's, daß alle Not  
Mit meinem Leben völlig enden soll (569-70).

Iphigenie, too, he hopes, may follow him soon into the underworld:

Komm, folge mir ins dunkle Reich hinab !  
Wie sich vom Schwefelpfuhl erzeugte Drachen,  
Bekämpfend die verwandte Brut, verschlingen,  
Zerstört sich selbst das wütende Geschlecht;  
Komm kinderlos und schuldlos mit hinab ! (1234-8).<sup>81</sup>

It is this belief that the curse can and will end with the extinction of their race, that enables him to accept so readily the apparent reality of his vision in the next Scene, in which the Tantalids walk peacefully together hand in hand.

Iphigenie is moved by her brother's suffering. But her pity only awakens in him memories of Klytämnestra's dying appeal:

Du siehst mich mit Erbarmen an ? Laß ab !  
Mit solchen Blicken suchte Klytämnestra  
Sich einen Weg nach ihres Sohnes Herzen;  
Doch sein geschwungner Arm traf ihre Brust.  
Die Mutter fiel ! (1239-43).

It is no physical resemblance which reminds him of Klytämnestra —if there had been any such resemblance, Orest would no doubt have noted it before now.<sup>82</sup> The explanation of the lines is to be found in the word 'Erbarmung': Iphigenie's look expresses pity, Klytämnestra's had implored it; and the similarity awakens a painful memory.<sup>83</sup> His mother, he feels, can be well satisfied with her vengeance, and he calls upon her spirit and the avenging Furies to witness the most terrible spectacle of all:

Tritt auf, unwill'ger Geist !  
Im Kreis geschlossen tretet an, ihr Furien,  
Und wohnet dem willkommenen Schauspiel bei,  
Dem letzten, gräßlichsten, das ihr bereitet ! (1243-6).

So far the crimes in the house of Tantalus had been inspired by hatred and a desire for revenge: no such motives inspire this atrocity; the murder is forced upon a loving sister:

Nicht Haß und Rache schärfen ihren Dolch;  
Die liebevolle Schwester wird zur Tat  
Gezwungen (1247-9).

He even seeks to comfort her, for she is after all only the unwilling tool of the curse.<sup>84</sup> Nor does he bear her any grudge; on the contrary, had his life been spared, there is no one, he feels, whom he could have loved more:

Weine nicht! Du hast nicht schuld.  
Seit meinen ersten Jahren hab' ich nichts  
Geliebt, wie ich dich lieben könnte, Schwester (1249-51).<sup>85</sup>

He ends by declaring, with considerable bitterness it seems to me, his readiness to die, and he visualizes his death at her hands:

Ja, schwinge deinen Stahl, verschone nicht,  
Zerreiße diesen Busen und eröffne  
Den Strömen, die hier sieden, einen Weg! (1252-4).<sup>86</sup>

In his excited frame of mind, the thought is too much for him, and 'er sinkt in Ermattung'.

Iphigenie, in her extremity, now seeks the help of the 'fremder Mann', Pylades. She leaves Orest alone, thus giving him the opportunity, while slowly recovering, to describe, in a monologue, his vision of the underworld.

## ACT III, SCENE II: OREST

OREST's vision of the underworld constitutes the third stage of the healing process. The Scene consists of a short monologue of fifty-one lines, spoken as Orest recovers from his 'Ermattung'—the stage directions run: 'aus seiner Betäubung erwachend und sich aufrichtend'—in which he describes his experiences in the underworld. The vision is unknown to the earlier dramatists; for though the idea is to be found in Gotter's *Orest und Pylades* and in his French forerunners—in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, too, Orestes is so overcome by the onslaught of the Erinyes that he falls unconscious and his *Orestes* opens with a scene in which he lies prostrate—Goethe's execution is so different as to constitute an entirely new creation. Besides, it is here an integral and indispensable part of the cure: it brings to full fruition the hope of forgiveness implanted in Orest's mind by Iphigenie in Scene i; and it enables him to taste in spirit the pangs of death which his distorted imagination had come to regard as necessary for the atonement of his crime. In the vision he realizes that the love and forgiveness Iphigenie had shown

are realities that extend beyond the grave. As his forefathers now dwell in perfect harmony, so he, too, can be sure of a welcome in their midst. This conception of a state of complete forgiveness and beatitude is the outcome of her treatment. Her good work, however, would never have borne such fruits, but for Orest's mood. The wish to die and the conviction that he can atone for his crime by death alone, have prepared his mind for the ready acceptance of that experience and, as has already been pointed out, lend the vision a reality without which it would have been ineffective. He had regarded death not merely as an escape from the Furies, but as the penalty for his crime; and his mental death restores his mental poise. He has, in other words, paid the penalty. Thus his mood works hand in hand with Iphigenie's influence.<sup>87</sup>

The first few lines in Scene ii describe Orest's comparative calm. The process of transition from complete unconsciousness to a dream state is gradual, and he asks for one more cup from Lethe's waters, so that the bonds which still bind him to life on earth with all its painful associations, may be severed entirely. There then follows his description of the vision of his forefathers, gathered together in peace:

Wer ist die Schar, die herrlich mit einander  
Wie ein versammelt Fürstenhaus sich freut ?  
Sie gehen friedlich, Alt' und Junge, Männer  
Mit Weibern; göttergleich und ähnlich scheinen  
Die wandelnden Gestalten. Ja, sie sind's,  
Die Ahnherrn meines Hauses (1269-74).

The first of his forbears whom he witnesses, are Atreus, Thyest, and the latter's sons, whom Atreus had murdered:

Mit Thyesten  
Geht Atreus in vertraulichen Gesprächen;  
Die Knaben schlüpfen scherzend um ihn her.  
Ist keine Feindschaft hier mehr unter euch ?  
Verlosch die Rache wie das Licht der Sonne ? (1274-8).

It is not without reason that the happy relations between the two brothers should be emphasized at the outset: theirs was not only the most revolting of all the Tantalid atrocities—in her narrative in Act I, Scene iii, Iphigenie dwells upon it only a little less than she does on the initial 'Vergehen' of Tantalus—but it was also the first of those which have a direct bearing on the matricide. By Atreus' act, according to the fable, a feud between the two brothers and their respective descendants arose. Agamemnon, the eldest son of Atreus, was murdered by, or on the instigation of, Aegisthus, the son of Thyestes (in Goethe's version he is the actual murderer) and thus the death of his two brothers

was avenged. This murder was in its turn, avenged by Agamemnon's son, Orestes. We have already noted a certain vagueness on Goethe's part on these points: the relationship of Ägisth and Orest is passed over—Ägisth is merely one of the 'nahverwandte Mörder'—and Goethe does not definitely state whether Ägisth fell by Orest's hand, a point on which the Greek dramatists leave us in no doubt. By stressing the reconciliation of the actual creators of the feud, Goethe has indicated that the feud itself has come to an end; Orest's share in it, too, is therefore done with, and he can approach his forbears with confidence:

So bin auch ich willkommen, und ich darf  
In euern feierlichen Zug mich mischen (1279-80).

The remainder of the monologue is addressed to the shades themselves; he first addresses Atreus and Thyest:

Willkommen, Väter! euch grüßt Orest,  
Von euerm Stamme der letzte Mann;  
Was ihr gesät, hat er geerntet:  
Mit Fluch beladen stieg er herab.  
Doch leichter trägt sich hier jede Bürde.  
Nehmt ihn, o nehmt ihn in euern Kreis!  
Dich, Atreus, ehr' ich, auch dich Thyesten;  
Wir sind hier alle der Feindschaft los (1281-8).

His words are significant. It is the first time that Orest lays any claim to, or makes any appeal for, mercy or forgiveness; his words: 'Was ihr gesät, hat er geerntet', are not an accusation, but a plea that his crime, which was only a natural consequence of theirs, had an equal right to forgiveness. His plea, however, is only fully justified when we regard his deed as a link in the chain of atrocities performed under the impetus of the curse. Above all, it shows that Iphigenie's influence has already borne fruit: he now regards himself less as a criminal, than as a victim. And his crime, no less than those of his forbears, is one which can and will be absolved.

The shades of Atreus and Thyest are followed by those of Agamemnon and Klytämnestra:

Zeigt mir den Vater, den ich nur einmal  
Im Leben sah! Bist du's, mein Vater?  
Und führst die Mutter vertraut mit dir?  
Darf Klytämnestra die Hand dir reichen,  
So darf Orest auch zu ihr treten.  
Ich darf ihr sagen: sieh deinen Sohn!  
Seht euern Sohn! heißt ihn willkommen! (1289-95).

His first remark is strange. How is it possible for him to have seen his father 'only once', or to be able to remember that occasion? In her narrative in Act I, Scene iii (ll. 407-12),



Iphigenie throws no light on Orest's age when his father departed for Troy, but there seems to have been at least a short interval between his birth and the outbreak of the Trojan Wars. Goethe's lack of precision may perhaps be due to the slight contradiction in Euripides: in the *Iphigenia at Aulis* Orestes is old enough to accompany his mother and sister to Aulis and even to appeal to his father for his sister's life. In *Iphigenia in Tauris*, however, he is spoken of as a mere child; after her dream, which seems to presage Orestes' death, Iphigenia exclaims: 'Now I weep my brother's death . . . little Orestes, my baby brother. My mother nursed him; on her lap he played' (p. 60). Again in his *Orestes* Menelaus, on his arrival at Argos, addresses the Chorus: 'Tell me then where to find the son of Agamemnon, the daring author of that fearful crime; for he was but a babe in Clytemnestra's arms that day I left for Troy, so that I should not recognize him, even were I to see him' (p. 288). Goethe's lines may therefore be taken to refer, not to the time before the Trojan Wars, when Orest would be very young, but after Agamemnon's return, when he obtained a glimpse of his father, probably after his death, before he himself was hurried away to safety. The memory would only emphasize the contrast between then and now:

Auf Erden war in unserm Hause  
Der Gruß des Mordes gewisse Lösung,  
Und das Geschlecht des alten Tantals  
Hat seine Freuden jenseits der Nacht (1296-9).

The mention of Tantalus' name brings us to the final stage of the vision: he desires to behold 'der Alte', and his words betray an admiration for the founder of their race, comparable with that which we noted in Iphigenie:

O, führt zum Alten, zum Ahnherrn mich!  
Wo ist der Alte? daß ich ihn sehe,  
Das teure Haupt, das vielverehrte,  
Das mit den Göttern zu Rate saß (1301-4).

But here we find one exception to the scheme of complete reconciliation and beatitude: Tantalus is condemned to eternal damnation:

Ihr scheint zu zaudern, euch wegzuwenden?  
Was ist es? leidet der Göttergleiche?  
Weh mir! es haben die Übermächt'gen  
Der Heldenbrust grausame Qualen  
Mit ehrnen Ketten fest aufgeschmiedet (1305-9).

What these 'grausame Qualen' are, we are not told. Goethe has wisely shunned the naïve punishments, described in the *Odyssey*,

of hunger, which he is unable to satisfy, and thirst, which he cannot quench, or the equally naïve threat of a stone or sword hanging perpetually over his head, described by Euripides and others. Even the 'ehrne Ketten' we must, I think, interpret metaphorically. Are we to understand his punishment other than eternal exclusion from the beatified reconciliation? He simply does not participate in the blessings now bestowed by the Gods on his descendants. What is the explanation? Goethe offers none. But he does distinguish between Tantalus' crime and those of his descendants; for while theirs were sins committed against men, his was a sin against the Gods themselves, a deadly sin, we must assume, and consequently—like the sin against the Holy Ghost in the Christian religion—one that can never be forgiven.

### ACT III, SCENE III: OREST, IPHIGENIE, PYLADES

SCENE iii deals with Orest's reawakening and final healing. His first words:

Seid ihr auch schon herabgekommen? (1310),

indicate at once the intensity and reality of his dream: in his condition of semi-consciousness, he believes that he is still in the underworld and that Iphigenie and Pylades have also descended.<sup>88</sup> Only Elektra is absent—he thus harks back to the thoughts on the complete extinction of their race expressed just before his 'Ermattung'—and he hopes that a kind God may also send soon 'die *eine*, mit sanften Pfeilen'.<sup>89</sup> But he pities Pylades, his poor friend, who must share their fate.

There then follows Iphigenie's great appeal to Diana and Apollo, which we shall quote in full:

Geschwister, die ihr an dem weiten Himmel  
Das schöne Licht bei Tag und Nacht herauf  
Den Menschen bringet und den Abgeschiednen  
Nicht leuchten dürft, rettet uns Geschwister!  
Du liebst, Diane, deinen holden Bruder  
Vor allem, was dir Erd' und Himmel bietet,  
Und wendest dein jungfräulich Angesicht  
Nach seinem ew'gen Lichte sehnend still.  
O, laß den Einz'gen, Spätgefundenen mir  
Nicht in der Finsternis des Wahnsinns rasen!  
Und ist dein Wille, da du hier mich bargst,  
Nunmehr vollendet, willst du mir durch ihn

Und ihm durch mich die sel'ge Hülfe geben,  
 So lös' ihn von den Banden jenes Fluchs,  
 Daß nicht die teure Zeit der Rettung schwinde ! (1317-31).

The prayer serves two purposes. It is calculated to convince Orest that he is not in the underworld, but in the land of the living; for it focuses his attention on the sun, which cannot shine upon the departed. This, however, is only by the way. Iphigenie's object, as in all times of stress, is to implore help from her Gods.<sup>90</sup> It is, moreover, the only time that she appeals to both Diana and Apollo. There is good reason for her doing so; for while it was by Diana's intervention at Aulis that she found herself at once saved and exiled in Tauris, it was Apollo's oracle which had brought Orest to his present plight. Her plea is that, like the Gods, they too are 'Geschwister'; and she reminds Diana—as Euripides' Iphigenia reminds her Goddess—of her love for her brother, Apollo. The Gods, she believes, cannot therefore abandon them.<sup>91</sup>

Iphigenie's special appeal that Orest might be freed from the pursuit of the Furies and delivered from the darkness of madness, is, perhaps naturally, addressed to Diana alone. She ends with a definite request: if the object of her deliverance from death on the altar at Aulis has been achieved, namely, that she and her brother should mutually prove a means of help, then she begs that he may quickly be freed from the bonds of the curse, so that the opportunity for escape may not be lost.<sup>92</sup> The wording of this appeal is also significant: it shows for the first time, that Iphigenie, too, had implicitly believed in the oracle—or, to be more exact, in the version of it given by Pylades—and that she now associates herself with the hope it holds out of a return to Greece. The Gods at last seem to have given the sign for her 'Rettung', for which she prayed.

The effects of Iphigenie's prayer are not at once apparent. Pylades first reiterates her implied reminder to Orest—his manner is more direct, if less sublime—that he is still in the land of the living:

Erkennst du uns und diesen heil'gen Hain  
 Und dieses Licht, das nicht den Toten leuchtet ?  
 Fühlst du den Arm des Freundes und der Schwester,  
 Die dich noch fest, noch lebend halten ? Faß  
 Uns kräftig an ! wir sind nicht leere Schatten.  
 Merk' auf mein Wort ! Vernimm es ! Raffe dich  
 Zusammen ! (1332-8).

Like Iphigenie, he is anxious that valuable time should not be lost:

Jeder Augenblick ist teuer,  
Und unsre Rückkehr hängt an zarten Fäden,  
Die, scheint es, eine günst'ge Parze spinnt (1338-40).

Iphigenie's prayer, rather than Pylades' practical admonition, seems to be effective: Orest's first words are addressed 'zu Iphigenien':

Laß mich zum erstenmal mit freiem Herzen  
In deinen Armen reine Freude haben ! (1341-2).

In words which bear a strong resemblance to some earlier lines of Iphigenie's (ll. 1094-1114), he praises the Gods who send 'der lang erflehte Regen', who resolve man's 'grausendes Erwarten' in 'Segen', and who turn 'das bange Staunen' into 'Freudenblick und lauter Dank'. It is, therefore, in his opinion, the Gods who, through his sister's instrumentality, have freed him from his curse; his full gratitude to Iphigenie is expressed towards the end of the play (ll. 2119-26). For the present he only wishes to enjoy and retain gratefully the Gods' blessings with his sister and his friend:

O, laßt mich auch in meiner Schwester Armen,  
An meines Freundes Brust, was ihr mir gönnt,  
Mit vollem Dank genießen und behalten ! (1355-7).

He is convinced that the curse is ended. The Furies, whom he no longer regards as Erinyes, but as Eumenides—we must accept the full significance and implication of Goethe's use here, for the first time, of the word 'Eumeniden'—withdraw to Tartarus; and he experiences new zest and courage to face life:

Es löset sich der Fluch, mir sagt's das Herz.  
Die Eumeniden ziehn, ich höre sie,  
Zum Tartarus und schlagen hinter sich  
Die ehrnen Tore fernabdonnernd zu.  
Die Erde dampft erquickenden Geruch  
Und ladet mich auf ihren Flächen ein  
Nach Lebensfreud' und großer Tat zu jagen (1358-64).<sup>93</sup>

The more practical Pylades is impatient at the loss of time which should be put to a useful purpose; only the wind which swells their sails, he declares, can bring them full joy. In the meantime they must take council and evolve a plan:

Versäumt die Zeit nicht, die gemessen ist !  
Der Wind, der unsre Segel schwellt, er bringe  
Erst unsre volle Freude zum Olymp.  
Kommt ! Es bedarf hier schnellen Rat und Schluß (1365-8).

J. G. Robertson justly remarks that there is no problem in *Iphigenie auf Tauris* which has more persistently engaged the minds of elucidators of the play in recent years than the healing

of Orest. How is it effected? he asks; and, more particularly, what is the role of Iphigenie herself in bringing it about?<sup>94</sup> The process of healing which we have suggested above, though perhaps logical enough, will not satisfy everyone; for, as we have seen, of the four factors, two—the vision and the prayer—are supernatural or spiritual. One might refuse to accept either or both as effectively contributory. Robertson dismisses the prayer at once: ‘we are not asked to believe’, he states, ‘that her prayer in the third act has any part in her brother’s healing’. And regarding the vision, he only remarks that the all-essential factor is Orest’s belief in its reality and that it is ‘one of the most inspiring fruits of the poet’s optimism’; but he ignores it as a curative factor. We are therefore thrown entirely on the dialogue in Scene i. Even here Robertson recognizes only the psycho-analytical section as valid. He thus seeks a purely rational interpretation, and dismisses what he terms ‘the religious interpretation, which used to be in favour’. While it is true that a purely religious interpretation is unconvincing—Orest’s cure is not brought about by remorse and confession in the religious sense and completed by absolution—nevertheless a purely rational interpretation, to my mind, ignores much that is of vital importance in Goethe’s play.

Robertson’s first point is that Orest does not regard himself as a free agent: he was only an instrument of the Gods and ‘the conviction of irresponsibility is brought home to him by the fact that the Gods point out the way to him by which he may obtain relief’. But can one claim that a conviction of irresponsibility is compatible with guilt and with the ‘Reue’ and ‘Zweifel’ which oppressed Orest? True, he had acted at the behest of the Gods, but he never regarded his crime so lightly as to unburden his conscience by laying the blame at their door. His journey to Tauris, far from promising to be a way by which he should find relief, seemed to lead only to death: the Gods seemed intent upon destroying him. Free agent or not, he was responsible not only in his own eyes, but also, he believed, in the eyes of the Gods. This feeling of responsibility underlies his confession to Iphigenie. It is true, as Robertson says, the confession is ‘in accordance with the traditional technique of the theatre, for the enlightenment of the audience’. But the technique of the theatre forbids an action without reasonable impulse or motive on the part of the characters. Goethe makes his Orest act under an impulse which he knew to be a vital force in human mental make-up. Confession need not be either religious or psychiatric to be beneficial; and indeed neither Iphigenie nor Orest regard it as either. Iphigenie encourages, or draws, it because she desires to learn of the fate

of her kinsfolk—she has certainly no thought of healing or absolving him—and he is impelled by the human impulse to expose a crime of which he repents. He has no wish to do penance nor is he conscious of seeking relief—the opposite of relief is in fact the immediate result—but, as he states, he cannot act otherwise. Iphigenie is of that type of human being who, even against the will of the confessor, seems to draw confidences from others of a certain type. Why this should be so, we do not know; perhaps there is no explanation, and Orest himself is baffled by his behaviour. I have mentioned the call of blood, but the phenomenon exists even where there is no such relationship. Whatever the explanation, his action is in keeping with a natural human impulse of the mind to unburden itself of a load and regain balance. Had Orest been convinced of his 'irresponsibility', there would have been no confession.

But does Orest's confession, taken by itself, have much effect? We are bound to admit it has not. Robertson seems to take another view. 'The healing of Orestes', he says, 'is not dissimilar to that effected by the curative process of psychoanalysis, where the patient unburdens himself of his complexes and thereby regains sanity and balance'. And again: 'The task of Iphigenie is not that of priestess, but rather analyst, in which she is assisted by Pylades; she provides the opportunity for Orestes to taste in spirit the pangs of death, and to forget his past in a new life.' But the explanation is inadequate. We observe no sanity or balance in Orest after he unburdens himself; on the contrary, his violence increases. It would hardly be the duty of the analyst to provide the patient with 'the opportunity to taste in spirit the pangs of death'. This is provided by Orest's discovery of *the sister*, and the realization of all the tragedy that that implies. Nor is it her task to make him 'forget the past in a new life'. It is unlikely that he will ever forget. All she can do, all that is necessary, is that his attitude to the past should change. Iphigenie inspires him with new hope and makes him believe in the possibility of forgiveness, and this forms the basis of his vision. It would not have been possible but for his experience of her forgiveness and love; but her role in inspiring this hope was not that of analyst, but of priestess and sister.

We may sum up by examining a few of Robertson's questions, which go to the root of this healing problem. 'Can we say more', he asks, 'than that the emotional upheaval in Orestes, when he discovers that she is his sister, facilitates his healing in so far as it strengthens him to face life with fresh zest and courage?' But it is a mistake to suppose that his upheaval facilitates his

healing at all: its sole object is to bring on the 'Ermattung', which, in its turn, provides the conditions necessary for the vision. He is enabled to face life with new zest and courage in consequence of the healing as a whole; the upheaval is a mere link between different factors in the healing process. Again Robertson asks: 'If Iphigenie is the agent of her brother's cure, in what capacity does she effect it? As sister, as priestess, or merely as pure and high-souled woman?' The question assumes that Iphigenie alone cures Orest, and that she does so in perhaps one particular capacity. But this is not the case. Iphigenie is all three: priestess, sister and high-souled woman, and in each capacity she plays a part. As priestess her acquittal carries the more weight, since it at once comes from a stranger and from one who stands upon a plane which, as Orest knows and she herself emphasizes, results from long severance from the world; as sister she reveals a love, forgiveness and sympathy—a sister's blessing balances a mother's curse—and inspires a belief in the final victory of good, which find their echo in the complete beatified reconciliation reigning in the house of Tantalus in the underworld; only as a pure and high-souled woman could her administration have had any effect, and only to a high-souled woman would Orest have confided his secret. But even so, can we say that Iphigenie alone effects the cure? I think not. This point is raised by Robertson's next question: 'What is the critical turning-point whereby Orestes is restored to sanity? Is it when he unburdens himself to his sister, or when he believes himself in the underworld, or when he finds himself once more among the living?' Here again the question assumes that there is one definite factor or incident which chiefly, perhaps alone, deserves the credit for the healing; and three factors, or 'turning points', are suggested. But again this is not so, for each factor makes only its own particular contribution, and each is necessary. When Orest unburdens himself to the priestess—not to the sister, an important point if we are to determine the 'critical turning-point' and the capacity in which Iphigenie may have effected the cure—we have a mere preliminary stage, without which all else would be inconceivable. Its object is to bring him to view his crime more objectively. But it does not cure him. If it did, the rest of the Act would be superfluous. Again when Orest believes himself in the underworld, there are no signs of healing. All that happens is that the faith inspired by Iphigenie finds ratification and is strengthened; convinced of forgiveness in the underworld, he is prepared eventually for the equally important belief in the possibility of forgiveness on earth. The final turning-point, the prayer, is followed immediately by the

healing. Whether we accept or dismiss it as one of the healing factors, for the Greeks it was of vital importance; they had no doubts about the efficacy of prayer—they had both experienced the direct intervention of the Gods in their lives—and Orest's most recent experiences were such as to inspire him with the belief that this prayer, too, would be answered. Therein lay its strength. The awakening of this new faith was the work of Iphigenie. Her role was therefore limited. Apart from uttering the prayer, it was played out by the end of Scene i. She has no part in Orest's realization of higher truths: that is an affair of the Gods, an act of grace. Iphigenie therefore effects no mysterious cure; but there is something mysterious in the way the Gods bring the seeds she implants in Orest's mind to full fruition. This mysterious process Goethe symbolizes by such things as a vision and a prayer. The words he puts into Orest's mouth when he returns fully to sanity, seem to bear this out; for though Iphigenie has been the initiator of the healing, the final healing is *their* gift alone:

Ihr Götter, die mit flammender Gewalt  
 Ihr schwere Wolken aufzuzehren wandelt  
 Und gnädig-ernst den lang' erflehten Regen  
 Mit Donnerstimmen und mit Windesbrausen  
 In wilden Strömen auf die Erde schüttet,  
 Doch bald der Menschen grausendes Erwarten  
 In Segen auflöst und das bange Staunen  
 In Freudeblick und lauten Dank verwandelt,  
 Wenn in den Tropfen frischerquickter Blätter  
 Die neue Sonne tausendfach sich spiegelt  
 Und Iris freundlich bunt mit leichter Hand  
 Den grauen Flor der letzten Wolken trennt;  
 O, laßt mich auch in meiner Schwester Armen,  
 An meines Freundes Brust, was ihr mir gönnt,  
 Mit vollem Dank genießen und behalten ! (1343-57).

Apart from the manner of the healing, there is the question of its efficacy. Here again Robertson puts his finger on the crucial points. 'Are we sure', he asks, 'that Iphigenie, Orestes and Pylades . . . will live happily ever afterwards? Can we believe that moments will not come in the lives of brother and sister when the black past will rise up again, when the Furies will once more raise their ugly heads and be at Orestes' heels?' Robertson's reply is: 'It is not human that these two can ever forget the dire fate in which they and their curse-laden race have been ensnared.' As has been pointed out, Orest's cure does not include his forgetting the past; but his attitude to the past undergoes a fundamental change, and Goethe is at pains to show that this attitude is no passing phase. We find him in the next



two Acts, instead of wishing to die, filled with a new zest for life, the moving spirit of their enterprise, and embued with a clarity of thought which enables him to unravel the true meaning of the oracle. For the time being at least, the cure was complete. But will it last? There is no guarantee that it will. But can a cure ever be guaranteed? All that can be done is to remove the causes which gave rise to the malady. And this has been done. The mother's curse has been made void, and the avenging Furies have withdrawn to Tartarus. It is true, he remains his mother's murderer, and since the deed can never be undone, he can never forget. But he has undergone experiences which have shown him that, grave though his crime was, it is not beyond the range of forgiveness. He will no doubt have moments when the black past will rise up, moments of regret, but we have no reason to suppose that he will not now lead a normally tranquil life. Besides, we must not entirely overlook the circumstances. Goethe was to some extent bound by the fable, and the problem he sets us is not whether an eighteenth or twentieth century matricide, having successfully evaded his lawful punishment, can live happily ever after, but whether Orest, having committed a crime which was a duty and after having borne in spirit the pangs of death, whereupon he is given unquestionable proof of the Gods' forgiveness and good-will, can ever be at peace with himself. The problem is hardly realistic, but neither is the curse. We are asked to believe that the Gods, having laid a curse on a family, finally resolve to terminate it. If we can accept this—as we must do, if Goethe's work is to mean anything—it should not be difficult for us to imagine that Orest's malady, which was only a part and an outcome of the curse, will likewise be done with.

## ACT IV, SCENE I: IPHIGENIE

ACT IV, in which Iphigenie holds the stage throughout, consists of five Scenes: i, a monologue; ii, a dialogue with Arkas; iii, a monologue; iv, a dialogue with Pylades; v, a monologue. It presents Iphigenie's mental and moral conflict, leading up to her final victory in Act V.<sup>95</sup> Conflict and victory imply development, and indeed, like so many of Goethe's works, this play may in some respects be regarded as a 'Bildungsroman'. The heroine is not static; she is not the acme of perfection from the outset, in spite of Goethe's lines:

Reine Menschlichkeit sühnet  
Alle menschliche Gebrechen,

Her humanity, though 'rein', is by no means perfect. She has her weaknesses and her weak moments. She lies to Arkas, she concurs in the deception of her best friend and becomes an accessory in the plot to deprive him of the image, and she loses for a moment her implicit faith in the goodness of her Gods. The outcome of the struggle is that she determines to obey the dictates of her heart, instead of the oracle: inspired, rather than revealed, religion is to be her guide. When she is ready to put her regained faith to the test, her victory is complete. Not only do the Gods vindicate her faith in their essential goodness, they show that their revealed will, when rightly understood, is not in conflict, is in fact in conformity, with the impulses of the pure heart.

Between Acts III and IV—as was the case between Acts II and III—we must imagine an important scene off the stage, in which Pylades sets forth his plan for their escape and for the theft of the image, allotting to Iphigenie the role of deceiving Thoas. In this way Goethe has avoided the repetition we find in Euripides, who first gives a discussion of the plan, followed by its execution.

Scene i opens with Iphigenie's soliloquy on the goodness of the Gods, who, when they inflict turmoil on men's minds or compel them to undergo painful transitions between joy and sorrow—her own recent experiences are still fresh in her mind—always provide a friend, who is able to help. Without drawing a direct analogy, she exclaims:

O, segnet, Götter, unsern Pylades  
Und was er immer unternehmen mag! (1382-3).

She further describes Pylades' dual role of protector of her

brother and author of their plan of escape:

Er ist der Arm des Jünglings in der Schlacht,  
Des Greises leuchtend Aug' in der Versammlung;  
Denn seine Seel' ist stille, sie bewahrt  
Der Ruhe heil'ges, unerschöpftes Gut,  
Und den Umhergetriebnen reichet er  
Aus ihren Tiefen Rat und Hülfe (1384-9).<sup>96</sup>

Iphigenie then gives a brief account of the events which followed on the dropping of the curtain in Act III. Recognizing the need for 'schneller Rat und Schluß', Pylades had torn her from the arms of her brother, whom she, in her joy, could not behold sufficiently. She refers briefly to the plan, which is already under way, and the role which has been assigned to her:

Jetzt gehn sie, ihren Anschlag auszuführen,  
Der See zu, wo das Schiff mit den Gefährten,  
In einer Bucht versteckt, aufs Zeichen lauert,  
Und haben kluges Wort mir in den Mund  
Gegeben, mich gelehrt, was ich dem König  
Antworte, wenn er sendet und das Opfer  
Mir dringender gebietet (1395-1401).

The nature of the 'kluges Wort' is only revealed in the next Scene, when the King's messenger, Arkas, arrives to demand the sacrifice. In the meantime she expresses her abhorrence of lying as such:

O weh der Lüge! sie befreiet nicht,  
Wie jedes andre wahr gesprochne Wort,  
Die Brust; sie macht uns nicht getrost, sie ängstet  
Den, der sie heimlich schmiedet, und sie kehrt,  
Ein losgedrückter Pfeil, von einem Gotte  
Gewendet und versagend, sich zurück  
Und trifft den Schützen (1405-11).<sup>97</sup>

It may be noted that no mention is made of any loathing for a lie which involves the deception of her best friend. The realization of this aspect comes only after her conversation with Arkas, and her excuse is given in Scene iii.<sup>98</sup> Nor does she seem to have considered as yet the effects her lie will have on her great mission; this complication is only borne in on her later. For the present she recoils merely from the act of lying itself. Unlike Euripides' Iphigenia, she is unpractised in the arts of concealment and deceit, and she must be led like a child:

Ach! ich sehe wohl,  
Ich muß mich leiten lassen wie ein Kind.  
Ich habe nicht gelernt zu hinterhalten  
Noch jemand etwas abzulisten (1401-4).<sup>99</sup>

The fear uppermost in her mind at the moment is for the moral

injury which deception will inflict on the deceiver. This calls forth other fears of a more immediate and pressing kind: perhaps, outside the sanctuary of the holy grove, Orest has again been overcome by the Furies; perhaps he and his friend have been discovered. The sound of the approach of armed men seems to add certainty to the latter fear. But it is only the King's messenger, Arkas, and her heart sinks at the thought of the deception which circumstances now compel her to practise upon him:

Es schlägt mein Herz, es trübt sich meine Seele,  
Da ich des Mannes Angesicht erblicke,  
Dem ich mit falschem Wort begegnen soll (1418-20).

#### ACT IV, SCENE II: IPHIGENIE, ARKAS

SCENE II, the second of the two dialogues between Iphigenie and Arkas, consists of two distinct sections: in the first section Iphigenie tells her lie; the second harks back to the subject of their former dialogue in Act I, namely, the proposed marriage. Much has happened since then. Iphigenie has received an assurance from the King that she may return to Greece, if ever an opportunity should arise; she has found a long-lost brother, whose life is now threatened by the King's decision to resuscitate human sacrifice; and she has become an accessory in Pylades' plan. In Act I her refusal to entertain the King's proposal of marriage was based on her own inclinations and on her determination to remain free; now the issue has become complicated by the realization of the fact that her compliance would not only save her brother and his friend, but would also relieve her of the necessity of having recourse to deception. This is an argument that Arkas does not fail to use. But even so, a marriage, she feels, is impossible, and her only alternative is to hope and strive for the success of Pylades' plan. Her lie not only serves to inform the reader fully concerning the plan, but it also calls forth Arkas' appeal to Iphigenie's conscience and goodness of heart. His appeal bears fruit; for, in initiating the searching of heart, which marks Iphigenie's conduct from this point onwards, it is partially responsible for her resolve in the beginning of Act V to act on her own initiative. The Scene is therefore a turning point in her career.

The Scene opens with Arkas' announcement of the King's command that the priestess shall hasten her preparations for the sacrifice, which he and his people eagerly await. Iphigenie

replies:

Ich folgte meiner Pflicht und deinem Wink,  
Wenn unvermutet nicht ein Hindernis  
Sich zwischen mich und die Erfüllung stellte (1423-5).

Her deception has begun: she pretends that she would gladly perform her duties as priestess and obey the King's instructions, while in reality she has no such intentions. To Arkas' very natural query concerning the nature of the 'Hindernis'—for he wishes to report the matter to the King at once—she recites the 'kluges Wort' which she described as 'mir in den Mund gegeben' (ll. 1398-9):

Die Götter haben ihn noch nicht beschlossen.  
Der älteste dieser Männer trägt die Schuld  
Des nahverwandten Bluts, das er vergoß.  
Die Furien verfolgen seinen Pfad,  
Ja, in dem innern Tempel faßte selbst  
Das Übel ihn, und seine Gegenwart  
Entheiligte die reine Stätte. Nun  
Eil' ich mit meinen Jungfrauen, an dem Meere  
Der Göttin Bild mit frischer Welle netzend  
Geheimnisvolle Weihe zu begehnen.  
Es störe niemand unsern stillen Zug (1430-40).<sup>100</sup>

Unlike Euripides' Thoas, Arkas is not deceived by Iphigenie's tale. He listens in silence and states briefly what measures he now deems to be necessary. This incident, more perhaps than any other, justifies Goethe's creation of the character of Arkas, who, of course, has no counterpart in Euripides' play; for the Guard, who reports the escape of the fugitives, i.e., the actual execution of the plan, has nothing in common with Goethe's character.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, the introduction of an intermediary obviates the necessity of Iphigenie's having to lie direct to the King. Nor can we conceive of Goethe's Thoas, a wise ruler, being successfully deceived; he would probably at once have given the lie to her words, which would have made her confession in Act V impossible or at least worthless. An intermediary, on the other hand, would make no immediate or decisive moves on his own initiative—he would first report to the King—thus allowing Iphigenie time to fight out her moral conflict. Arkas therefore remarks:

Ich melde dieses neue Hindernis  
Dem Könige geschwind; beginne du  
Das heilige Werk nicht eh', bis er's erlaubt! (1441-3).

After a few lines of heated stichomythia, in which Iphigenie insists on her right as priestess to order the ceremony as she thinks fit and Arkas stresses the wisdom of consulting the King

in the matter, if only 'zum Schein', he promises to make all possible haste:

Schnell bin ich mit der Nachricht in dem Lager  
Und schnell mit seinen Worten hier zurück (1451-2).

So much for Iphigenie's attempt at deception. It has failed entirely, not merely because Arkas, an astute man of affairs, divines something suspicious or irregular, but because Iphigenie, who is at best unpractised in the art of deception, has no real wish to deceive. Her lie is expressed without conviction. Is she at once aware of her failure? We are not told; but it would seem so, judging from the hesitancy in her narrative of these events to Pylades in Scene iv. One thing, however, is certain: any delay in the execution of the plan, from whatever cause, is welcome to her. Her feelings at the moment are therefore somewhat complex: disappointment at the failure of her project, relief because of the consequent delay, and, I imagine, a vague, undefined feeling of gratitude to Arkas for his astuteness and generosity.

What of Arkas? What does he really think? He obviously regards her story as a ruse: but to what end? In Euripides' play Iphigenia's deception of Thoas is so complete, that the news of the flight of the three Greeks comes as a shock to the barbarians. No such surprise is possible for Goethe's Scythians; her story is disbelieved from the outset. Yet in most respects they are not so well informed. Euripides' barbarians had for long known Iphigenia's name and descent, they even discover that one of the strangers is called Pylades—this they overheard in a conversation between them—and they took them to be Argives. Goethe's Scythians, on the other hand, imagined Iphigenie might be an Amazon, she only revealed her descent to Thoas when our play begins—we are not told whether he passed on this information to Arkas—and they are quite ignorant regarding the nationality of the two strangers. Arkas, at any rate, certainly did not know of the relationship between Iphigenie and the strangers, and he was ignorant of the oracle of Apollo and of Pylades' plan for its fulfilment. We may, therefore, assume that Arkas' present suspicions do not differ materially from those he expresses later to the King in Act V, Scene i, namely, that the whole story is a fabrication of the strangers, who, having won over Iphigenie as their accomplice, hope to gain time for their escape.

There is a simpler expedient for the solution of all their difficulties, Arkas suggests, namely, her marriage with Thoas; and he rebukes her:

O, könnt' ich ihm noch eine Botschaft bringen,  
 Die alles löste, was uns jetzt verwirrt!  
 Denn du hast nicht des Treuen Rat geachtet (1453-5).

Again there is an interchange of heated stichomythia, indicating the intensity of emotion awakened by the recalling of a painful subject. Iphigenie maintains she has done all that was in her power—she has given Thoas the 'gutes Wort', as she had promised (l. 217)—but beyond that she must leave matters in the lap of the Gods. To Arkas' retort:

Sie pflegen Menschen menschlich zu erretten (1463),  
 she replies:

Auf ihren Fingerzeig kommt alles an (1464).<sup>102</sup>

There is little doubt that she agrees with Arkas' argument. The only question is: What acts of man are most conducive to the attainment of man's 'Rettung'? Is it, in her case, that which Arkas advocates? or participation in Pylades' plan? or some independent course, such as that upon which she later resolves? Without doubt she believes that her present actions, obnoxious though they be, are in conformity with the 'Fingerzeig' of the Gods, and that, in submitting, she leaves the issue in their hands. The fact that the 'Fingerzeig' is at variance with her conscience and in conflict with her conception of the Gods, is one which she is still striving to ignore.

Argument has failed, the recalling of the question of marriage has only proved painful, and all that remains is for Arkas to appeal to her goodness. He reminds her of her enormous power for good in the past, and stresses the fact that the cure for their present ills rests in her hands alone:

Ich sage dir, es liegt in deiner Hand.  
 Des Königs aufgebrachter Sinn allein  
 Bereitet diesen Fremden bitteren Tod.  
 Das Heer entwöhnte längst vom harten Opfer  
 Und von dem blut'gen Dienste sein Gemüt.  
 Ja, mancher, den ein widriges Geschick  
 An fremdes Ufer trug, empfand es selbst,  
 Wie göttergleich dem armen Irrenden,  
 Umhergetrieben an der fremden Grenze,  
 Ein freundlich Menschenangesicht begegnet (1465-74).<sup>103</sup>

This speech may be taken as proof of Thoas' insincerity regarding his reasons for reviving human sacrifice; for Arkas here states categorically that it is 'des Königs aufgebrachter Sinn allein', which inflicts death on the strangers. In their former dialogue (I, ii) Arkas warned Iphigenie of the King's intentions of introducing certain measures which would be highly distasteful, in the event of her refusal (ll. 185-91), and the reasons he gave

were the death of his son and the consequent threat of civic unrest (ll. 157-63). He further warned her, in the event of her non-compliance, of the possibility of Thoas' drifting into an implacable frame of mind (ll. 187-9); his fears, it seems, have come true. Nor does his present reference to the army contradict what we have already been told about the people as a whole, who were content without human sacrifice, so long as all went well, but whose attitude has changed with their recent misfortune. Arkas' arguments are all true, so far as they go, but naturally he employs only those which he believes will serve his ends. His final argument refers to her unfinished task of civilisation:

O, wende nicht von uns, was du vermagst !  
 Du endest leicht, was du begonnen hast;  
 Denn nirgends baut die Milde, die herab  
 In menschlicher Gestalt vom Himmel kommt,  
 Ein Reich sich schneller, als wo trüb und wild  
 Ein neues Volk, voll Leben, Mut und Kraft,  
 Sich selbst und banger Ahnung überlassen,  
 Des Menschenlebens schwere Bürden trägt (1475-82).<sup>104</sup>

Iphigenie is moved, but such emotions are inconvenient; they are not conducive to the accomplishment of her task, which is already repugnant enough. When her appeal that he should desist fails, she remarks:

Du machst dir Müß', und mir erregst du Schmerzen;  
 Vergebens beides; darum laß mich nun ! (1487-8).

To which Arkas replies:

Die Schmerzen sind's, die ich zu Hülfe rufe;  
 Denn es sind Freunde, Gutes raten sie (1489-90).<sup>105</sup>

The contrast between Iphigenie's advisers has already been pointed out. But, as the above quotations show, even Arkas, who appeals to her conscience and goodness of heart, only acts according to his lights. His aims are undoubtedly praiseworthy: the King's happiness, the peace and security of the land, Iphigenie's good, the release of the prisoners, and the final abolition of human sacrifice; all of which could be attained by the marriage. And to the faithful Arkas the marriage itself was no unworthy means to these great ends. But Iphigenie's attitude has not changed since she described Thoas' 'Werbung' as 'eine Drohung—die schrecklichste von allen mir' (ll. 172-4). Thus she exclaims:

Sie fassen meine Seele mit Gewalt,  
 Doch tilgen sie den Widerwillen nicht (1491-2).

In his next remark Arkas further betrays his lack of understanding, though this time it may possibly be intentional :



Fühlt eine schöne Seele Widerwillen  
Für eine Wohltat, die der Edle reicht ? (1493-4).

Iphigenie feels no 'Widerwillen' for the 'Wohltat' which would result from the marriage, but for the marriage itself: it is no 'Wohltat', when the giver demands in return, not gratitude, to which he has a right, but her person:

Ja, wenn der Edle, was sich nicht geziemt,  
Statt meines Dankes mich erwerben will (1495-6).

Iphigenie could express no stronger condemnation. In her view it would be no marriage in the ordinary sense, no willing union, but a bargain by which certain benefits are bought. Such a bargain is to her unthinkable.

Even such words as these fail to convince Arkas. They are a mere excuse, and he has now no choice but to report the matter to the King. But before going he reminds her once again of Thoas' goodness to her since her arrival on these shores. His reproach for her apparent ingratitude and his reminder that there are other ways of rewarding Thoas than by deception, he leaves to be uttered by her conscience:

Wer keine Neigung fühlt, dem mangelt es  
An einem Worte der Entschuld'gung nie.  
Dem Fürsten sag' ich an, was hier geschehn.  
O, wiederholtest du in deiner Seele,  
Wie edel er sich gegen dich betrug  
Von deiner Ankunft an bis diesen Tag ! (1497-1502).

### ACT IV, SCENE III: IPHIGENIE

SCENE iii, a short monologue of twenty-nine lines, finds Iphigenie in the throes of her struggle. It is at once an apologia and a lament. In a few striking similes and telling phrases she defends her past and present conduct, and describes her ever-increasing tumult of mind and soul. She gives, in other words, the effects of her conversation with Arkas. Though he has failed to change her decision regarding the marriage, his reminder of Thoas' past kindness and his appeal to her conscience and sense of loyalty serve to make the plan and her participation in it more repulsive than ever. She begins to realize more fully the spiritual harm which must accrue from such action; she fears the loss of those virtues which she had ever prized and which, we learn later, she hoped would prove a blessing to her race. The possibility of acting on her own initiative and confiding in Thoas does not yet occur to her, she reluctantly determines to see the doubly-hated

plan through, and she ends with a lament on the loss of her spiritual and mental equilibrium, which, she foresees, will be the price of success.

Iphigenie opens her monologue with a bald statement that Arkas' words had moved her deeply:

Von dieses Mannes Rede fühl' ich mir  
Zur ungelegnen Zeit das Herz im Busen  
Auf einmal umgewendet (1503-5).

The time is indeed unpropitious. As she explains in a simile, the joy she had recently experienced had blinded her to everything else; but Arkas had given her a rude awakening:

Ich erschrecke.  
Denn wie die Flut, mit schnellen Strömen wachsend,  
Die Felsen überspült, die in dem Sand  
Am Ufer liegen, so bedeckte ganz  
Ein Freudenstrom mein Innerstes. Ich hielt  
In meinen Armen das Unmögliche (1505-10).

The Gods had indeed brought 'das Unmögliche' within her reach: Orest lives and is healed, and the long-desired return to Greece seemed to be at hand.<sup>106</sup> As Diana had once saved her from the altar at Aulis, so now, it seemed, she was about to release her from Tauris:

Es schien sich eine Wolke wieder sanft  
Um mich zu legen, von der Erde mich  
Emporzuheben und in jenen Schlummer  
*Mich einzuwiegen, den die gute Göttin*  
Um meine Schläfe legte, da ihr Arm  
Mich rettend faßte (1511-6).

Not satisfied with her simile, she gives a more direct statement for her reasons in so blindly following Pylades:

Meinen Bruder  
Ergriff das Herz mit einziger Gewalt,  
Ich horchte nur auf seines Freundes Rat;  
Nur sie zu retten, drang die Seele vorwärts (1516-9).<sup>107</sup>

Her life in Tauris becomes in her mind a thing of the past, and the joy this vision inspires is expressed in her second simile of the skipper gladly turning his back on a dangerous shore:

Und wie den Klippen einer wüsten Insel  
Der Schiffer gern den Rücken wendet, so  
Lag Tauris hinter mir (1520-2).

Thus, she explains, if she cannot wholly excuse, her lapse. Arkas, however, has reminded her that she would also be leaving 'Menschen' behind:

Nun hat die Stimme  
Des treuen Manns mich wieder aufgeweckt,  
Daß ich auch Menschen hier verlasse, mich  
Erinnert (1522-5).

Her chief sorrow, however, springs not so much from the parting from friends, as from its manner; it entails their deception. Thus she exclaims:

Doppelt wird mir der Betrug  
Verhaßt (1525-6).

Such mental turmoil threatens to undermine all her efforts; she must rid herself of indecision if she is to play her part in the plan successfully, and she seeks to calm herself:

O, bleibe ruhig, meine Seele!  
Beginnst du nun zu schwanken und zu zweifeln? (1526-7).

But she is fully aware of the consequences of success: her moral values will be destroyed, the firm ethical and religious basis of her life will disappear, and her self-esteem and her outlook on men and the world will be entirely changed. This again she illustrates with a third simile of the sea:

Den festen Boden deiner Einsamkeit  
Mußt du verlassen; wieder eingeschliffen  
Ergreifen dich die Wellen schaukelnd, trüb  
Und bang verkennest du die Welt und dich (1528-31).

#### ACT IV, SCENE IV: IPHIGENIE, PYLADES

In Scene iv Pylades, after reporting excellent news about Orest, seeks to counteract the influence he notices Arkas has had on Iphigenie. Since their only hope lies in the fulfilment of Apollo's command, he tries to convince her that she, too, must play her part; the Gods themselves are subject to the higher law of necessity, he declares, and there is no escape for her. He cannot, however, still her conscience, and at the threat of his putting his plan into execution, she recoils. With his departure her mental and moral conflict approaches its climax.

The scene opens with Pylades' question:

Wo ist sie, daß ich ihr mit schnellen Worten  
Die frohe Botschaft unsrer Rettung bringe? (1532-3);

to which Iphigenie replies:

Du siehst mich hier voll Sorgen und Erwartung  
Des sichern Trostes, den du mir versprichst (1534-5).

Pylades' 'good news' consists of two parts: (a) Orest is definitely healed, for even beyond the holy grove the Furies had been powerless to pursue him; (b) they have found their ship and their companions, and everything is in readiness for their flight. One cannot but feel that the inclusion of news about Orest's healing in the 'frohe Botschaft unsrer Rettung' is somewhat forced. Surely their escape could have been effected even without his healing, provided that he was safely brought on board. It seems rather as if Goethe had considered it advisable to emphasize once again the complete nature of Orest's healing, and chose the present speech as the most suitable for the purpose. In the first prose version Pylades does not link Orest's healing with their escape; there his concern was the possibility of a relapse.<sup>108</sup> In the final version no hint of any such fears is given. Iphigenie asks, not for 'Nachricht von meinem Bruder', but for 'Trost' in her present state of 'Sorgen und Erwartung', which, following so soon on her conversation with Arkas and her subsequent monologue, may be taken as an appeal to Pylades for help to overcome her doubts and indecision.

The following is Pylades' report in full:

Dein Bruder ist geheilt! Den Felsenboden  
Des ungeweihten Ufers und den Sand  
Betraten wir mit fröhlichen Gesprächen;  
Der Hain blieb hinter uns, wir merkten's nicht;  
Und herrlicher und immer herrlicher  
Umlodete der Jugend schöne Flamme  
Sein lockig Haupt; sein volles Auge glühte  
Von Mut und Hoffnung, und sein freies Herz  
Ergab sich ganz der Freude, ganz der Lust,  
Dich, seine Retterin, und mich zu retten (1536-45).<sup>109</sup>

Concerning this transformation in Orest the first version is less explicit: it emphasizes rather Pylades' fears. How can we account for the change? Firstly, we may, I think, assume that Orest's declaration regarding his cure at the end of Act III, which in 1779 appeared sufficient, struck Goethe later as inadequate; hence the new, additional emphasis here on his transformation. Secondly, Goethe did not wish to raise doubts in the minds of his readers; he therefore deemed it advisable to delete any references to such doubts on the part of his characters. Moreover, Pylades now shows the doubts expressed by Iphigenie in Scene i (ll. 1411-4) to be unfounded. The change, however, entailed Goethe's finding a new reason for Pylades' account. His solution was to link it up with, or to make it part of, 'die frohe Nachricht unsrer Rettung'. That Goethe should have deliberately introduced what may be regarded as a minor blemish in

order to avoid casting doubt on the complete nature of Orest's healing, shows once again the importance he attached to this latter point.

The second part of Pylades' 'frohe Botschaft unsrer Rettung' deals with the discovery of their companions and their ship:

Auch die Gefährten haben wir gefunden.  
In einer Felsenbucht verborgen sie  
Das Schiff und saßen traurig und erwartend (1551-3);

which prompts the question: why should they have lost them? It was perhaps natural enough that Orest and Pylades should leave their companions behind, while they set out on their hazardous journey—this, too, is apparently what happens in Euripides—and we may further assume that in the meantime the ship was brought to some suitable hiding-place. But it would appear that Goethe has perhaps over-simplified the elaborate account of their scheme given in the first prose version, which describes how, by means of a fire, they could give their ship the signal to come into the bay, whereupon Orest would return to the temple to inform Pylades and Iphigenie that all was in readiness.<sup>110</sup> Notwithstanding any consequent vagueness, Goethe did well to dispense with the incident. What takes its place is an added emphasis on the hazardous nature of the plan: no fire is to be lit; the ship is to leave the creek, while the ceremony is in progress; the timing must be precise and its execution swift, if success is to be assured. Euripides' Iphigenia demands that the ceremony should take place in solitude, even the guards on the shore must turn their gaze in another direction, to all of which Thoas agrees; Goethe's Iphigenie, however, though she likewise insists upon holding the ceremony in solitude —'Es störe niemand unsern stillen Zug' (l. 1440)—receives no such assurance. Goethe's Scythians are not deceived, and the dangers for the Greeks which this involves, are all the greater. Yet they are full of hope, and one of the chief causes of their optimism is the change they observe in Orest, which they take as an omen:

Sie sahen deinen Bruder, und es regten  
Sich alle jauchzend, und sie baten dringend,  
Der Abfahrt Stunde zu beschleunigen (1554-6).

Again we have the emphasis on Orest's complete cure.

There now follows a short incident which has no parallel in the first prose version, namely, Pylades' move to carry off the image himself:

Drum laß uns eilen, führe mich zum Tempel,  
Laß mich das Heiligtum betreten, laß

Mich unsrer Wünsche Ziel verehrend fassen !  
 Ich bin allein genug, der Göttin Bild  
 Auf wohlgeübten Schultern wegzutragen;  
 Wie sehn' ich mich nach der erwünschten Last ! (1560-5).

The stage directions then run: 'Er geht gegen den Tempel unter den letzten Worten, ohne zu bemerken, daß Iphigenie nicht folgt; endlich kehrt er sich um.' Observing her indecision he exclaims:

Du stehst und zauderst — Sage mir — Du schweigst !  
 Du scheinst verworren ! Widersetzest sich  
 Ein neues Unheil unserm Glück ? Sag' an !  
 Hast du dem Könige das kluge Wort  
 Vermelden lassen, das wir abgeredet ? (1566-70).

Since the incident passes without influencing the subsequent action, we may ask: What is its dramatic purpose ? Why did Goethe introduce it ? In the first version Pylades comes to the temple, intending to remain there till Orest brings news that all is in readiness for their flight; and he departs again on learning that Iphigenie has agreed to a postponement of the purification ceremony. In the final version he comes obviously with the intention of removing the image at once, and the reason he gives is the promising nature of the circumstances described in his 'frohe Botschaft unsrer Rettung'. He refrains, however, when he notices Iphigenie's hesitancy—he is obviously not prepared to act without her cooperation. The importance of the incident, it seems to me, is that it indicates the limit of Iphigenie's co-operation. She has never really envisaged the theft, and when placed before its immediate execution, she recoils. We noted that the delay caused by Arkas in Scene ii was welcome; now she herself brings about delay. She has, of course, tacitly agreed that no action shall be taken before Arkas' return, but there is also the deeper reason that in her heart there is neither the wish nor the intention to steal. When Pylades desists and the danger passes, she again reverts to her former attitude of passive acceptance of the plan. But she obviously hopes for some other solution, and the remainder of the scene is virtually a vain appeal to Pylades to relieve her of her role and, if possible, to renounce the plan.

A deadlock is unavoidable: Iphigenie has as little hope of succeeding in inducing Pylades to renounce a plan that promises escape and is sanctioned by the Gods, as he has of coercing her into any action which her heart condemns; and the deadlock is due to Pylades' lack of understanding. Arkas, we pointed out, appealed to all her nobler instincts, but he failed chiefly because what he advised conflicted with her great mission.

Pylades holds out the promise of all that is most dear to her. He bases his appeal on her love for her brother, her sense of duty to her family and her race, and obedience to the expressed will of the Gods. He fails because he disparages those virtues which Arkas had upheld. In renouncing those virtues Iphigenie would be untrue to herself; she would fail in her duty toward herself, a duty which, to her, is no less imperative than that toward the Gods; and she would just as surely fail in her mission.

Irritated by the delay, which Iphigenie's acquiescence in Arkas' demand has involved, Pylades blames her for not having used her office as an excuse: it is her right as priestess to order the ceremony as she pleases. She replies:

Als eine Hülle hab' ich's nie gebraucht (1582).

Iphigenie is alternately accused of not using, or of misusing, her office for her ends. Such qualms of conscience, Pylades states, will end in their undoing, and he blames himself for his lack of foresight:

So wirst du, reine Seele, dich und uns  
Zu Grunde richten. Warum dacht' ich nicht  
Auf diesen Fall voraus und lehrte dich,  
Auch dieser Fordrung auszuweichen! (1583-6).<sup>111</sup>

Iphigenie, however, takes the entire responsibility; she could not refuse a demand which was both just and eloquently pleaded:

Schilt  
Nur mich! Die Schuld ist mein, ich fühl' es wohl;  
Doch konnt' ich anders nicht dem Mann begegnen,  
Der mit Vernunft und Ernst von mir verlangte,  
Was ihm mein Herz als Recht gestehen mußte (1586-90).

Again, be it noted, we have this insistence on 'das Herz' as the true arbiter between right and wrong, as the ultimate 'Wegweiser'.

The situation can only be retrieved, Pylades believes, if Iphigenie acts firmly. He therefore gives her her new instructions, which, we may note, are never carried out:

Ruhig  
Erwarte du die Wiederkunft des Boten  
Und dann steh fest, er bringe, was er will!  
Denn solcher Weihung Feier anzuordnen,  
Gehört der Priesterin, und nicht dem König.  
Und fordert er, den fremden Mann zu sehn,  
Der von dem Wahnsinn schwer belastet ist,  
So lehn' es ab, als hieltest du uns beide  
Im Tempel wohl verwahrt. So schaff' uns Luft,  
Daß wir aufs eiligste den heil'gen Schatz  
Dem rauh unwürd'gen Volk entwendend fliehn (1593-1603).

We may, perhaps, observe behind Pylades' words the old idea that it is wrong for the barbarians to hold the image; its removal to Greece would therefore not only be an act of obedience to Apollo, but also a service to Diana herself, one deserving of a reward. Indeed, it strikes him as significant that the promised reward has been bestowed before the service has been rendered. Surely, he reasons, its bestowal is an augury for the success of their efforts and should spur them on; for the God, with divine foreknowledge, knows that it will be accomplished:

Die besten Zeichen sendet uns Apoll,  
Und eh' wir die Bedingung fromm erfüllen,  
Erfüllt er göttlich sein Versprechen schon.  
Orest ist frei, geheilt ! (1604-7).

Pylades retains his strongest argument till the end:

Du

Bringst über jene Schwelle Heil und Leben wieder,  
Entsühnst den Fluch und schmückest neu die Deinen  
Mit frischen Lebensblüten herrlich aus (1615-8).

How Pylades imagined she would expiate the curse, we are not told. He seems to guess that such was her ambition, and the thought was perhaps not unnatural to one who knew the curse's history and had witnessed its ravages. But the remark is weak, though its effect on Iphigenie is, no doubt, tremendous.

For the moment Iphigenie is again partially reconciled to her role; as she puts it, her soul, in the ray of his words, turns for sweet comfort, as the flower turns toward the sun. Pylades, feeling that the time is propitious, decides to seek out his companions; he will soon return for the image, he states, and will await a sign from her. Faced once more with the prospect of definite action, Iphigenie again recoils, as we see from Pylades' next remark:

Was sinnest du ? Auf einmal überschwebt  
Ein stiller Trauerzug die freie Stirne (1633-4).

Iphigenie makes light of it: it is only 'leichte Sorge und Bangigkeit', which darken the soul, as small clouds darken the sun; to which Pylades replies:

Fürchte nicht !

Betrüglich schloß die Furcht mit der Gefahr  
Ein enges Bündnis; beide sind Gesellen (1637-9).

It is vain for Iphigenie to try to deceive herself, and in her next few lines she expresses her dislike for the plan; it is nothing short of an out-spoken condemnation on moral grounds. Not fear, she states, is the cause of her hesitancy, but reluctance to deceive her best friend:



Die Sorge nenn' ich edel, die mich warnt,  
Den König, der mein zweiter Vater ward,  
Nicht tückisch zu betrügen, zu berauben (1640-2).<sup>118</sup>

When Pylades points out that this same friend has ordered the murder of her brother, she retorts:

Es ist derselbe, der mir Gutes tat (1644).

There can be no question of ingratitude, Pylades remarks, when necessity dictates; but again she objects:

Es bleibt wohl Undank; nur die Not entschuldigt's (1646).

He then pleads that 'die Not' suffices to excuse her action before Gods and men, but she is unconvinced; it remains ingratitude, and she cannot but condemn her action:

Allein mein eigen Herz ist nicht befriedigt (1648).

It is possible, Pylades argues, to set oneself a moral code that is unduly high, which only reveals hidden pride. But Iphigenie is unmoved by such fine analysis; she feels her act to be wrong, and that is enough:

Ich untersuche nicht, ich fühle nur (1650).

Unwittingly Iphigenie clearly indicates what her final choice will be: feeling, rather than reason or intellect, is to be trusted in making decisions between right and wrong. Pylades tries one more argument:

Fühlst du dich recht, so mußt du dich verehren (1651).

The line, which is ambiguous, may be translated: 'If you feel yourself to be right, i.e., morally justified in deceiving and robbing Thoas, as you have every reason to feel, you cannot but esteem yourself highly'. A second translation is: 'If you feel yourself aright, i.e., if you regard yourself in the correct light and value your actions properly, you will have good reason for self-esteem'.<sup>119</sup> Whether we take 'recht' to be an adjective or an adverb (I am inclined to favour the latter), Pylades' argument is the same. He is irritated by her 'zu strenge Forderung', which makes her task difficult, and he wishes her to descend from her heights of idealism to a level from which she would take a truer view of reality.

Iphigenie, however, is unwilling to descend to a lower moral plane; such concessions to reality are incompatible with pure happiness:

Ganz unbefleckt genießt sich nur das Herz (1652).

She is less concerned with what is sanctioned by worldly wisdom, than with the conditions which are conducive to the well-being of her heart; only by retaining its moral poise, can the heart

'be glad' and serve as man's unfailing guide and his true interpreter of the Gods' will.<sup>114</sup> Pylades has now no illusions about the seriousness of her scruples, and in a long speech he argues that the demands of life require some sacrifice of idealism.<sup>115</sup> Iphigenie, too, he maintains, must realize this fact:

So hast du dich im Tempel wohl bewahrt;  
Das Leben lehrt uns, weniger mit uns  
Und andern strenge sein; du lernst es auch.  
So wunderbar ist dies Geschlecht gebildet,  
So vielfach ist's verschlungen und verknüpft,  
Daß keiner in sich selbst noch mit den andern  
Sich rein und unverworren halten kann (1653-9).

Nor is it for us, he adds, to judge; our duty is to perform our immediate task:

Auch sind wir nicht bestellt, uns selbst zu richten;  
Zu wandeln und auf seinen Weg zu sehen,  
Ist eines Menschen erste, nächste Pflicht (1660-2).

Iphigenie's remark that she is almost persuaded, strikes Pylades as beside the point. There should be no need of persuasion, where no choice exists. To her appeal that he should be patient with her hesitancy, he utters lines which reveal his whole outlook. After reminding her of the bitter self-reproach that awaits her, if their plan fails, he stresses the trifling nature of the sacrifice demanded of her:

Man sieht, du bist nicht an Verlust gewohnt,  
Da du, dem großen Übel zu entgehen,  
Ein falsches Wort nicht einmal opfern willst (1674-6).

The 'falsches Wort' is just the crux. It harms the deceiver more than the deceived, and is 'doppelt verhaßt' when practised on a friend. She will never be able to utter it, till the promptings of her heart are silenced, and this, we know, can never come to pass:

O, trug' ich doch ein männlich Herz in mir,  
Das, wenn es einen kühnen Vorsatz hegt,  
Vor jeder andern Stimme sich verschließt! (1677-9).

But, we may well ask, had not Iphigenie already uttered the 'falsches Wort'? Surely she had lied to Arkas according to plan? Pylades' later instructions (ll. 1593-1601) are little more than a repetition of those given to her before the Act begins, with further admonitions that she should stress her rights as priestess. He apparently considers that she had not really deceived Arkas, or that her compliance with the latter's request for delay had to all intents and purposes cancelled the lie; and she must begin all over again. This, however, does not change the facts. What

may, perhaps, be said in Iphigenie's defence is that she made no real effort to deceive. Her lie was half-hearted; it was a lie of the lips, rather than of the soul; and her actions show that she had no real intentions of ever allowing the plan to succeed. Had this fact been as clear to her during the course of Act IV, as it is in the beginning of Act V, there would have been no conflict at all. But her progress to clarity is slow and gradual, and is achieved only by struggle.

Before withdrawing, Pylades again reminds her that Necessity, the sister of Fate, rules even the actions of the Gods, and that she, too, has no choice but to obey. He will soon return, he states, to receive from her hands the seal of their salvation—the holy image—without which their return would not, of course, receive the blessing of the Gods.

#### ACT IV, SCENE V: IPHIGENIE

SCENE V constitutes the climax of Iphigenie's conflict. It describes, in a short monologue, her swift progression from one mood to another: resignation to her role of deception, which marks her mood at the end of Scene iv, is followed by a partial loss of faith in her mission; uncertainty about the truth of her idealistic tenets causes her to recall the old faith of her fathers. Her opening lines, following on Pylades' departure, show her to be pliant and resigned; she obeys, not on her own account, but because others are in danger. Indeed, she begins to feel more and more that she is acting against her own interests. This is a vital change that takes place in her outlook during the Act. The escape from Tauris, which at first seemed to promise the realization of all her desires, now looms as a threat to her mission; the joy inspired by the discovery of a long-lost brother gives place to qualms of conscience and dread for her own fate. As she puts it:

Mein eigen Schicksal macht mir bang und bänger (1691).

What is this dreaded fate? Iphigenie now discloses for the first time her belief in her mission. She had, as we noted in the beginning of the play, built up for herself a conception of the Gods as good and loving, if not consistently just. Hence she could not believe that it was their will to punish the Tantalids indefinitely. There must be some kind of atonement, and, encouraged by her own experiences, she hoped to be the means of that atonement: a life of service in the temple and a pure heart should offset the crime of Tantalus and expiate the curse.

But, as she grows resigned to her role of deception, forced upon her by circumstances, the possibility of her being able to accomplish this task correspondingly fades:

O, soll ich nicht die stille Hoffnung retten,  
Die in der Einsamkeit ich schön genährt?  
Soll dieser Fluch denn ewig walten? Soll  
Nie dies Geschlecht mit einem neuen Segen  
Sich wieder heben? (1692-6).

Everything, even the good and beautiful, it seems, withers at last; but not the curse. Her hope, then, has proved to be vain, and the manner of its achievement futile. Thus she exclaims:

So hofft' ich denn vergebens, hier verwahrt,  
Von meines Hauses Schicksal abgeschieden,  
Dereinst mit reiner Hand und reinem Herzen  
Die schwer befleckte Wohnung zu entsühnen! (1699-1702).

What means do the Gods employ to thwart Iphigenie's good work? They do not summarily reject her offering. Their methods are more subtle: they deprive her of the virtues by which she had hoped to expiate the curse. True to their old methods, they foist on her a crime, which must end in guilt and punishment. Two courses are open to her: either to sacrifice her brother and his friend, or deceive and rob her best friend; and Pylades has convinced her that there can be only one choice:

So legt die taube Not ein doppelt Laster  
Mit ehrner Hand mir auf: das heilige,  
Mir anvertraute, vielverehrte Bild  
Zu rauben und den Mann zu hintergehn,  
Dem ich mein Leben und mein Schicksal danke (1707-11).

All this conforms with Iphigenie's belief that it is the Gods who decree that man shall become guilty. On the other hand it conflicts with her creed of loving Gods, who would gladly bestow on mortals something of their own eternal heaven. She struggles to preserve this latter idealistic element of her faith. If she should fail, however—if she should be compelled by the Gods to commit a crime and in consequence renounce her mission—then she may come to abhor them; the hatred that the old Gods or Titans, now banished to Tartarus, harbour toward the reigning Olympians, may, she fears, take possession also of her tender breast. May this, she implores, never come to pass:

O, daß in meinem Busen nicht zuletzt  
Ein Widerwille keime, der Titanen,  
Der alten Götter, tiefer Haß auf euch,  
Olympier, nicht auch die zarte Brust  
Mit Geierklauen fasse! (1712-6).

And, as in all moments of stress, she appeals to these Olympians to save her from sin and to preserve her idealistic conception of them in her soul:

Rettet mich

Und rettet euer Bild in meiner Seele! (1716-7).

We have reached a climax. It is followed, naturally perhaps, by a pause or breathing space, and then by a relapse. The thought of the just hatred which the Titans bear towards the new Gods—though the descendants of Tantalus, who was a son of Zeus and Pluto (*πλουτώ*), the daughter of Cronos, were not actually Titans, they are credited with some of their qualities (cf. l. 328)—inspires her with a new fear: Is this new conception of the Gods as good and loving, this 'Bild in meiner Seele', the true one? Are they not rather jealous, spiteful, cruel, and unforgiving? Is not the conception of my fathers, which was instilled into me in my youth—so different from the present 'Bild in meiner Seele'—possibly the true one? And now the song, which the Parcae sang, when Tantalus was banished from the table of the Gods, and which recalls the old conception—for the Parcae, too, were banished and hated the Olympians—comes back to her mind. With this song, which she had learnt from her nurse and which she had only too willingly tried to forget, the Act comes to an end.

Few problems in *Iphigenie* have received more widely divergent interpretations than the prayer in this Act and its subsequent Parcae's song, and we may now turn to a discussion of a few of these.

A. Bielschowsky<sup>116</sup> has little to say about the prayer, beyond the fact that it is a natural reaction to circumstances as *Iphigenie* sees them: 'Nun zwingen die Götter auch sie, sich zu beflecken. Sie fühlt ihren Glauben an die Güte des Lebens bedroht'. It might be more correct, perhaps, to substitute 'die Güte der Götter' for 'die Güte des Lebens'. Concerning the *Parzenlied*, he writes: 'Iphigenie singt das Lied von den unbarmherzig über die Schicksale der Menschen hinwegschreitenden Göttern, um sich von diesem trostlosen Glauben . . . durch Schauder zu befreien'... (1928 ed., pp. 431-2). In the earlier edition Bielschowsky suggests other interpretations (which he rightly rejects), e.g.: 'Sollte etwa so rasch ihr Glauben sich ins Gegenteil verkehrt haben? Können wir das bei Iphigenie und angesichts der soeben an die Götter gerichteten Bitte: 'Rettet mich und rettet euer Bild in meiner Seele!' annehmen? Oder sollte das Lied nur ein breiteres Ausklingen der Erinnerung an den alten Titanenhaß bedeuten, das sich der Dichter gestattete, um ein funkelndes Schmuckstück dem Gold der Dichtung einzufügen'.

(Ed., 1922, pp. 436-7). There is much to be said for Bielschowsky's main theory: the realization of the tragic nature of the old conception, vividly recalled by the recital of the *Parzenlied*, clarifies Iphigenie's thoughts and purges her emotions. Through this *katharsis*, here affecting not the spectator but the character herself, she at once recoils and reverts to her true self and her natural faith. Carl Fries,<sup>117</sup> too, apparently sees something of the purge in the *Parzenlied*: 'Das Ganze hat die Bedeutung einer Warnung für sie'. J. Gundolf<sup>118</sup> is less concerned with an explanation of the text 'aus sich heraus', than with the analogy between Iphigenie's and Goethe's experiences. He describes Iphigenie's mood before the prayer as 'ein momentanes leidenschaftliches Aufbäumen der Priesterin gegen die Götter, indem sie den unverdienten Fluch, das unnachgiebige Verhängnis, die taube Not empfindet'. This, to my mind, is an overstatement; the 'Aufbäumen', so far, is towards the lie as such; it is not yet directed against the Gods, though she envisages such a contingency. This is the mentality behind the prayer, which Gundolf aptly sums up: 'In diesem Gebet ist die Essenz alles dessen was ein Mensch vom reinsten Willen fühlt, wenn ihm unter der Last unverdienter Leiden oder verhängten Erbfluchs der Glaube zu schwinden droht'. Gundolf rightly describes the *Parzenlied* as a memory of the 'Möglichkeit, daß Sühnung unmöglich sei', as 'ein Nachklang einer bösen Vergangenheit, nicht ein Vorklang zerstörender Zukunft'. But he omits to say that the latter is entirely dependent on her faith prevailing. Like Bielschowsky, he regards the effect of the *Parzenlied* as a purge: 'Indem Iphigenie durch das Parzenlied das Bild der bösen Willkür, der Fluchwelt, des gesetzlosen Kampfes zwischen Göttern und Titanen aufruft, objektiviert sie sich die Gefahr und das Leid, wie es Goethe selbst zu objektivieren und damit zu bannen wußte'. A point made by Gundolf, which I have tacitly assumed in my discussion, is: 'Das Betenkönnen ist schon das Zeichen der Gnade'. Without this mentality the old conception, as embodied in the *Parzenlied*, would undoubtedly have prevailed, and consequently hatred of the Gods would have replaced love.

H. Bulthaupt<sup>119</sup> rightly regards Iphigenie's first attempt at deception as abortive, because she lacked the will to deceive: 'Als sie "das falsche Wort" sprechen soll, vermag sie es doch nicht so, wie sie gewollt, wie ihr der kluge Pylades geraten. Sie verstrickt sich selbst.' The realization that she must make a real effort causes a revulsion and calls forth the prayer: 'Ihre Sorge wird zur Verzweiflung, die Notwendigkeit scheint sie zur Lüge zwingen zu wollen, und qualvoll schreit sie auf: "O, daß in meinem Busen", etc.' Bulthaupt is naturally less concerned

with the meaning of the prayer, than with its histrionic effect, which, he believes, springs from its Christian attributes: 'Wie nah tritt uns diese Iphigenie, die modern, die (man gestatte mir das Wort) christlich empfindende! Die Griechin, die diese moralischen Scrupel nicht kennt, vermöchte sie es uns so nachhaltig zu ergreifen?' It is a pity that Bulthaupt, after this just observation, does not show why this 'christlich empfindende' Iphigenie should relapse into the *Parzenlied* mentality.

H. Düntzer<sup>120</sup> explains the prayer thus: 'Vor einem solchen bitteren Hasse bewahrt zu werden und das Bild der Götter als gütiger Helfer und Retter in ihrer Brust zu erhalten, mit diesem ängstlich inbrünstigen Wunsche wendet sie sich an die Götter selbst'. It is, then, the same wish, expressed twice over! In her monologue Iphigenie voices two distinct fears: firstly, the fear that, by her crime, she will be unable to carry out her mission; secondly, the fear that, should this come to pass, she may finally hate the Gods. Both of these fears, in my view, are expressed separately in the two parts of the prayer. The *Parzenlied*, Düntzer believes, shows Iphigenie's awakening hatred of the Gods: 'Der Widerwille gegen die Götter beginnt bereits in ihrer Brust sich zu regen . . . So ended der Aufzug großartig tragisch mit dem in Iphigeniens mildem und reinem Herzen sich regenden grausen Widerwillen gegen die Götter'. We are nowhere told that Iphigenie begins to hate her Gods, she only fears that such a thing may not be impossible. Certainly the *Parzenlied* does not prove any hatred on her part; it is a mere echo of the old conception which represented them as Gods that should be feared.

W. Bittmann<sup>121</sup> regards the words preceding the prayer as indicating the ascendancy of the old conception: 'So gewinnt jetzt diese Tradition die Oberhand'. But later he questions it: 'In dem reinen, edlen Herzen dieser Himmlischen . . . sollte sich das Abbild "des größten Vaters" in dieses Zerrbild verwandeln?' We know, of course, that it does not; there can, therefore, be no question of the old tradition ever having gained the upper hand.

Kuno Fischer,<sup>122</sup> like Bittmann, aptly contrasts the ends of Acts I and IV, which portray respectively Iphigenie's faith and doubt. 'Wer wird Recht behalten', Fischer asks: 'der Glaube und die Hoffnung Iphigeniens in ihrem Gebet an die Göttin (in Act I) oder jenes alte grausige *Parzenlied*?' But his sequence of events is inexact when he speaks of it as 'das Parzenlied, das ihr unwillkürlich in den Sinn kommt, da sie, von Pylades gedrängt, den Bruder retten soll, indem sie den Thoas betrügt'. Later, Fischer completely reverses the sequence: 'Die Erin-

nerung an das Parzenlied erwacht und sie fleht die Götter an, sie vor dem Fluch zu bewahren.' His next statement: 'Sie ist entschlossen, dem Könige die Wahrheit zu sagen', which indicates immediate victory over her doubts and fears, is belied by the fact that the *Parzenlied* finishes the Act.

G. Schlosser,<sup>123</sup> too, reverses the order: 'In dieser Gewissensnot wendet sich ihre Seele nach oben, woher allein Hilfe kommen kann, betend, rufend aus tiefster Not: "Rettet mich . . ." Mit diesem Gebet ist Gewißheit in ihr Herz zurückgekehrt'. He does not state what the 'Gewißheit' is, nor does he show how the subsequent *Parzenlied* can be reconciled with it. The explanation, perhaps, is that, recognizing Iphigenie's break with deception before the beginning of Act V, both Fischer and Schlosser try to find her victory over herself before the end of Act IV. This is not so. The *Parzenlied* shows neither 'Gewißheit' nor victory. Herman Grimm's<sup>124</sup> view coincides somewhat with Schlosser's. He speaks of the *Parzenlied* as 'eine erlösende Erinnerung', which 'über sie kommt und ihr die Ruhe wieder schenkt'. Further, he states: 'Das Lied der Parzen bildet nur das letzte bestärkende Argument für eine Entscheidung, die jetzt von Anfang an festzustehen scheint'. This is, of course, true; but we can hardly imagine that such a decision would be taken in a complacent frame of mind. There is no more 'Ruhe', than there is 'Gewißheit', in the *Parzenlied*.

C. Steinweg,<sup>125</sup> like Düntzer, believes that Iphigenie almost hates the Gods: 'Fast mit Haß im Herzen gegen die Götter weicht Iphigenie der Notwendigkeit'. Later, he definitely speaks of her hatred: 'Haß gegen die Götter steigt in ihrer Seele empor als letzter Rest des Haßes jener Titanen, denen sie doch auch entsproßen ist'. Surely this does violence to the text. If she already hates the Gods, why should she hope that she may not do so 'zuletzt'? Why pray for the preservation of a conception which has already vanished? Steinweg further believes that her hatred continues into the next Act: 'In dieser Stimmung tritt sie dem erregten Thoas gegenüber' (p. 31).

Ch. Schrempf<sup>126</sup> admirably sums up the doubts and fears, not hatred, which lead up to the prayer: 'Es ist für sie eine Anfechtung, die das erworbene Vertrauen in die Götter wieder gefährdet, daß sie . . . die Reinheit preisgeben soll, auf der doch die bessere Zukunft der Tantaliden ruht. Es regt sich wieder in ihr der furchtbare Argwohn, daß die Götter vielleicht doch nur ihr rohes, höhnisches Spiel mit den Sterblichen treiben. Aus tiefster Seelennot muß sie die Götter anflehen: "Rettet mich, und rettet euer Bild in meiner Seele!"' Schrempf then proceeds to the discussion of the 'Weltanschauung' revealed in the play: 'Die



Geschichte der beiden Geschwister wird in Goethes Darstellung ein Symbol der allgemeinen Stellung des Menschen im und zum Leben . . . Der Dichter bezeugt uns als objective Wahrheit des Lebens, daß wir in der Obhut liebender Götter stehen, die besser für uns sorgen, als wir selbst es zu tun vermögen. Wir können also nichts besseres tun, als daß wir unser Heil ihnen anheimstellen.' The Gods' ready fulfilment of the prayer would seem to support Schrempf's contention. But it is opposed to Goethe's own 'Weltanschauung', which was not one of complacent inaction. Iphigenie does not trust to prayer alone. Her life is one of service to the Gods and her fellow men, and she sets herself the task of saving her house by her efforts; for the gifts of the Gods are only conferred according to men's worthiness. The philosophy of Iphigenie, therefore, is not that the Gods provide for man better than he can do himself—her belief in the history of Tantalus definitely eliminates such a view—but that they *may* do so, if man, by playing his part, makes it possible for them. On the other hand Schrempf rightly describes one of the ethical ideas embodied in the play: 'Wir haben nie einen zureichenden Grund, zur Sicherung unseres Lebens, zur Erfüllung unserer Wünsche, Mittel zu gebrauchen, durch die wir uns selbst erniedrigen und beflecken'. This is very true; it is just because Iphigenie refuses to believe that the end justifies the means, that she enables the Gods to perform their good offices. But the real thought in Schrempf's mind, I suspect, is the general inaptitude of such an ethical conception in real life; the Gods apparently do disappoint men. Iphigenie, too, knew the risk—she stresses her fears in Act V—for everything depends upon Thoas; in other words Thoas had the power to prove her idealism to be sheer folly. But should, then, the Gods, or man, be to blame? The 'Weltanschauung' is one which is difficult, perhaps impossible, to apply consistently in real life, for it is after all only an ideal—the ideal conception, as Goethe visualized it, of man's relationship to his fellow-men, to the problems of life, and to the Gods.

J. G. Robertson,<sup>127</sup> discussing the prayer at length—he has little to say of the *Parzenlied*—translates it as follows: 'If ye gods do not stand by me now in my hour of need, my faith in you will be destroyed, and with it my whole confidence in a providential guidance of human affairs from on high. Take your choice: accede to my prayer, and I will continue to believe in you; disappoint me, and I repudiate you!' He then, naturally, asks: 'Is this not arrogance in its most desperate form?' If it was Goethe's intention, as he himself stated, to allow nothing to pass his heroine's lips, that could not be spoken by St. Agatha,

then he has surely signally failed! Such a challenge would not only have brought a shattering thunderbolt of Zeus on the Greek Iphigenia, as Robertson remarks, but also on Goethe's Iphigenie. For her Gods, too, punish mercilessly, where punishment is due. As Robertson justly adds: 'The Gods must inevitably leave the mortal in the lurch—it is the very essence of the conception of deity in all religions—who arrogantly challenges them as Iphigenie does; who dares presumptuously what she dares. Her act necessarily involves tragic consequences.' Goethe, too, was no doubt aware of this truth. Yet he has failed to supply the tragic consequences. The conciliatory close, which Robertson finds unfitting, is not there merely because it was 'provided by Euripides'; nor is it a 'psychological and religious justification of Euripides' plan, such as a modern audience would accept.' It is the natural solution of Goethe's own plan. The truth is that Robertson foists upon Iphigenie a prayer which she does not utter; he assumes that what is really in her mind is: 'Rettet mich, und *dadurch* rettet euer Bild in meiner Seele, sonst . . . !' And he blames Goethe for not providing the tragic conclusion which should, and no doubt inevitably would, follow upon such a foolish and arrogant challenge.

Barker Fairley,<sup>128</sup> rather cautiously, expresses the view: 'There is scarcely a breath of revolt or self-assertion in the poem.' Self-assertion we do find in Iphigenie's action in Act V, but this is obviously not the kind that Barker Fairley means. Certainly, of self-assertion of the defiant type against the Gods there is not a breath. E. M. Butler<sup>129</sup> has nothing to say of the prayer, but she finds a note of optimism throughout the work: ' . . . Even the Parcae's Song of Iphigenia (is) powerless to dispel the deep, unanswerable conviction that all will yet be well.' This is true, but only perhaps because we know the end. A first reading in later life, might inspire us with greater fear. Yet there is truth in the remark, for we are bound to share, to some extent, the thoughts and emotions of the characters. In Iphigenie's mind fear is uppermost at the moment, but she has not given up hope altogether; for without hope she would never have made an appeal to the Gods at all.

Finally, I will add an interpretation of the prayer suggested to me by A. S. L. Farquharson, which acts as a kind of amplification of my own interpretation given above. Translating the prayer as I do: 'Preserve me and preserve your image in my soul', Farquharson takes the word 'Bild'—here a kind of 'Wortspiel'—as ambiguously applied not only to Iphigenie's idealistic conception of the Gods in general, but more particularly to her own personal ideal of Diana. In

Goethe's play the solution of the oracle turns on the sister's being preserved, and (contrary to the legend) the image being left behind; 'may there not', Farquharson asks, 'be in the prayer an enigmatic reference to the fact that, although the image, with all its cruel associations, now purified, is left behind, the heroine carries its idealized form with her back to the land of her fathers?' The theory at once brings this prayer into line with the others in the play: it, too, prescribes the course of the subsequent action. There are, indeed, no subtleties in Iphigenie's mind while she prays; her one thought is to be saved from the threatening crime and to have her idealism preserved. Yet she does, enigmatically, suggest the means by which the oracle may be fulfilled, the method which, in fact, the Gods, unknown to the Greeks, had decreed at the outset and which is even now being employed, namely, substitution. Since a peaceful solution could hardly be found which entailed the removal of the image—it might be difficult to imagine that Thoas would ever consent to this—its place should be taken by an ethereal image. i.e., the ideal conception of Diana in Iphigenie's soul: a spiritual image should replace the plastic. Only a pure soul, however, can entertain such a vision or image; hence the first part of Iphigenie's appeal is to be saved from a crime which threatens to unfit her. It is noteworthy, too, that after Orest's recognition of the true meaning of the oracle in Act V, he should describe Iphigenie as a 'Schützerin des Hauses' (l. 2130) who, 'gleich einem heiligen Bilde' (l. 2127), has been saved by the Goddess and preserved in the temple, in order that she might retrieve at last all that has been lost, and, returning to Greece, expiate the curse. The oracle had apparently demanded the return of the image of Diana: it is fulfilled by the return of Iphigenie, 'gleich einem heiligen Bilde', with the idealized image of Diana in her soul.

## ACT V, SCENE I: THOAS, ARKAS

**B**ETWEEN Acts IV and V we must again imagine an important development off the stage: Iphigenie overcomes her doubts in the goodness of her Gods and determines to break with deception. She still accepts the oracle in its literal sense and strives for its fulfilment, but she hopes that other means may be found and that the Gods will glorify truth through her. She puts them and her conception of them to the test. There is, however, the human, as well as the divine, element to be considered. How will Thoas react? She knows him to be a noble man. Will his religious beliefs inspire in him obedience to Apollo's command, or cause him to insist on his right to retain the image? His very belief in human sacrifice as the true form of worship constitutes a real threat. Iphigenie's decision is therefore fraught with danger. She trusts her Gods, but she knows, too, that the issue for the moment depends less on them than on the reactions of the King. It lies in his power to thwart their purpose. Thus he now becomes the central figure and holds the stage throughout the Act. There are six Scenes: i, a dialogue with Arkas; ii, a monologue; iii, a long dialogue with Iphigenie; iv, a short Scene with Thoas, Iphigenie and Orest; v, an even shorter Scene with all the characters (the only scene in which all the characters appear on the stage); vi, the final scene with the three principals, Thoas, Iphigenie and Orest.

Scene i consists of two short speeches: Arkas reports on his interview with Iphigenie, and Thoas orders what counter measures should be taken. Arkas refrains from accusations; he is perplexed, he states, and shrewdly sums up his suspicions in two questions:

Sind's die Gefangnen, die auf ihre Flucht  
Verstohlen sinnen? Ist's die Priesterin,  
Die ihnen hilft? (1769-71).<sup>180</sup>

He informs the King of a rumour that the ship, by which the strangers arrived, is hidden in a creek. And he ends:

Und jenes Mannes Wahnsinn, diese Weihe,  
Der heil'ge Vorwand dieser Zögerung rufen  
Den Argwohn lauter und die Vorsicht auf (1774-6).<sup>181</sup>

Thoas orders that the priestess shall be brought to him immediately and, while the sanctuary of the temple is to be respected, a thorough search should be made for the Greeks.

## ACT V, SCENE II: THOAS

IN a short monologue Thoas describes his anger, which alternates between Iphigenie, whom he had ever regarded as holy, and himself, whose mistaken generosity has stimulated her treason. After a general observation that man, when totally deprived of freedom, easily accommodates himself to slavery, he reflects how different her behaviour would have been, had she fallen into the hands of his uncivilized ancestors:

Ja, wäre sie  
In meiner Ahnherrn rohe Hand gefallen,  
Und hätte sie der heil'ge Grimm verschont,  
Sie wäre froh gewesen, sich allein  
Zu retten, hätte dankbar ihr Geschick  
Erkannt und fremdes Blut vor dem Altar  
Vergossen, hätte Pflicht genannt,  
Was Not war (1789-96).<sup>182</sup>

In other words, she would, glad to be spared herself, have performed the ceremony of human sacrifice unflinchingly and uncomplainingly. His goodness, on the other hand, has increased her nostalgia. He begins to realize the futility of his hopes of winning her as his wife, and ends with the bitter reflection that, having found him proof against flattery, she now turns to cunning and deception:

So sucht sie sich  
Den Weg durch List und Trug, und meine Güte  
Scheint ihr ein altverjährtes Eigentum (1801-3).

There are no signs here of Thoas' regarding Iphigenie as the author of, or prime mover in, the plot, and he is certainly unaware as yet that it is to include the theft of the image. But he has no doubts about her being in league with the strangers, he disbelieves her story about the need for a purification ceremony—an obvious ruse to gain time, he thinks—and she is clearly preparing for flight. His trust, he feels, has been betrayed and his affection ill-rewarded, and, with a heart full of disappointment and anger, he receives her for their momentous interview.

## ACT V, SCENE III: THOAS, IPHIGENIE

SCENE iii presents us with one of the most difficult problems of the play. We are in no doubt about Thoas' mood and intentions when the Scene opens; but what of Iphigenie? Some critics think that she had already overcome her doubts and was determined to rely on truth before the end of Act IV, a theory we have contested above.<sup>183</sup> Others believe that she meets Thoas in that defiant frame of mind which, they say, characterized her towards the end of Act IV, and that only gradually, during their dialogue, does she throw falsehood to the winds.<sup>184</sup> Such shrewdness would, no doubt, be very natural, perhaps even laudable, in Euripides' Iphigenia, but it would surely be out of place in Goethe's heroine; truthfulness of this kind has little moral value, and a confession, inspired by the knowledge that all is lost already, would hardly deceive Goethe's Thoas. Iphigenie's confession, I believe, is inspired by wisdom of a higher order, arrived at only after long and bitter conflict and searching of heart. Yet we must not imagine that she approaches Thoas with a fixed policy or plan: she has no clear notion what she will say or how much she will reveal. Her indecision springs from fear; she is still anxious to save her brother and his friend, if she can, and is determined to help them to carry out the command of Apollo, as she understands it. But she is equally resolved that all this shall be done by honest means and with Thoas' cooperation. She therefore makes two appeals to him—this is the content of the Scene. The first, very naturally, is that he should spare the lives of the strangers. When Thoas turns a deaf ear, she confides all: she reveals that their plan embraces not only their own escape, but also the theft of the image, and that its removal has the sanction of Apollo. Her second appeal is that he, too, should obey the Gods; indeed it becomes almost a command and a threat. The Scene ends with Thoas still hesitating to grant definitely this second appeal—which includes the first, as the whole includes the part.

The contradiction in Iphigenie's first line is only apparent:

Du forderst mich; was bringt dich zu uns her? (1804).

The King had indeed commanded the priestess to be called to his presence (l. 1777), but as he had come within the precincts of the holy grove—the scene remains unchanged throughout the play—Iphigenie regards the occasion as a royal visit to her and to her Goddess; hence the 'uns'. After a few lines of heated stichomythia, she remarks that, if he still harbours cruel inten-

tions, it would have been better for him to have stayed away:

Wenn dir das Herz zum grausamen Entschluß  
Verhärtet ist, so solltest du nicht kommen! (1810-1).

*And in her next speech she reveals her unwillingness to obey his command to perform the sacrificial ceremony:*

Von Jugend auf hab' ich gelernt gehorchen,  
Erst meinen Eltern und dann einer Gottheit,  
Und folgsam fühlt' ich immer meine Seele  
Am schönsten frei; allein dem harten Worte,  
Dem rauhen Ausspruch eines Mannes mich  
Zu fügen, lern' ich weder dort noch hier (1825-30).

Thoas' defence is that the sacrifice is demanded, not by him, but by an old law; to which Iphigenie retorts:

Wir fassen ein Gesetz begierig an,  
Das unsrer Leidenschaft zur Waffe dient (1832-3).

There is a modicum of truth in her remark—the law did coincide with Thoas' nuptial wishes—but it is not clear whether, in the heat of the moment, Iphigenie sees things in this light, or only hopes, by stressing the selfishness and cruelty of his orders, to restrain and convert him. When she adds that she obeys a very different law—one that treats every stranger as sacred—she reveals, unwittingly, where her sympathies and allegiance lie. To this Thoas remarks:

Es scheinen die Gefangnen dir sehr nah  
Am Herzen; denn vor Anteil und Bewegung  
Vergisdest du der Klugheit erstes Wort,  
Daß man den Mächtigen nicht reizen soll (1837-40).

The ground is prepared for Iphigenie's first appeal. Whether she speaks or remains silent, she states—in other words, whether she offends him or not—he is welcome to know all that is in her heart; for there is nothing she wishes to conceal:

Red' oder schweig' ich, immer kannst du wissen,  
Was mir im Herzen ist und immer bleibt (1941-2).

She reminds him that she, too, had once been threatened by death on the altar; she, too, had trembled, when the knife was raised to smite her, and, recovering from a swoon, had found herself in Tauris. The memory of such an experience naturally inspires sympathy with others in a similar plight:

Sind wir, was Götter gnädig uns gewährt,  
Unglücklichen nicht zu erstatten schuldig?  
Du weißt es, kennst mich, und du willst mich zwingen?

(1852-4).

Thoas is not to be won over so easily. But he has no counter-

argument—in his heart he cannot but agree with her—and he gives the curt command:

Gehorche deinem Dienste, nicht dem Herrn ! (1855).

There is a note of defiance or anger in Iphigenie's next remark, in which she again accuses him of making a convenience of an old custom:

Laß ab ! Beschönige nicht die Gewalt,  
Die sich der Schwachheit eines Weibes freut ! (1856-7).

She stresses her helplessness by reminding him that, were Agamemnon's son to stand before him, he would defend his rights with the sword—a prediction which is fulfilled in the next Scene. And in her following speech, as if to excuse their plan and the part she had played in it, she argues that the weak are justified in meeting force with cunning, their only means of defence:

Auch ohne Hülfe gegen Trutz und Härte  
Hat die Natur den Schwachen nicht gelassen;  
Sie gab zur List ihm Freude, lehrt' ihn Künste;  
Bald weicht er aus, verspätet und umgeht.  
Ja, der Gewaltige verdient, daß man sie übt (1868-72).

This defence of cunning, which conflicts with Iphigenie's moral code and with all her utterances elsewhere, only serves to introduce lines of the utmost importance. To the King's natural retort:

Die Vorsicht stellt der List sich klug entgegen (1873),

she replies:

Und eine reine Seele braucht sie nicht (1874).

But had she not already employed 'List' ? She had lied to Arkas, and Thoas is obviously afraid of further deception. Can she then lay claim to be 'eine reine Seele' ? Does she not rather condemn herself out of her own mouth ? This, at any rate, is Thoas' view:

Sprich unbehutsam nicht dein eigen Urteil ! (1875).

Yet he is wrong. She seeks to excuse deception, but she cannot explain its necessity. What she cannot reconcile is that the Gods should apparently require it, while 'eine reine Seele' abhors it. Nor should we imagine that her decision to confess is suddenly taken at this particular moment, as a result of Thoas' hint concerning counter-measures. She was well aware that she had not successfully deceived Arkas and that Thoas would take action; his hint therefore only confirms a situation which she knows must have existed for some time. Nor has she any reason to believe that all is lost, for she has implicit faith in the



ultimate success of a plan of which the Gods obviously approve. But, as we know, she had recoiled from the plan; her chief concern was not whether deception was politic or not, but whether she should obey the Gods or her own heart. A policy of honesty and truth was the one she had ever striven for, and she describes her struggle in her next lines:

O sähest du, wie meine Seele kämpft,  
Ein böß Geschick, das sie ergreifen will,  
Im ersten Anfall mutig abzutreiben ! (1876-8).

It is not Thoas' hint or any threat of failure that enables Iphigenie to overcome this 'böß Geschick', but her revulsion from the old conception of the Gods as conjured up in the *Parzenlied*—a kind of *katharsis*, as Bielschowski describes it.<sup>135</sup> With her faith in good Gods, which this experience fully restores, deception is incompatible. But it is no easy matter to convince Thoas—the recent deception of Arkas is still fresh in his mind—and Iphigenie ends on a note of despair:

Was bleibt mir nun, mein Innres zu verteid'gen ?  
Ruf' ich die Göttin um ein Wunder an ?  
Ist keine Kraft in meiner Seele Tiefen ? (1883-5).

Iphigenie's first appeal has virtually failed. By having recourse to the old law, Thoas maintains his former inflexible attitude. The only result is that she has betrayed her solicitude for the strangers, and he now demands to know who they are:

Es scheint, der beiden Fremden Schicksal macht  
Unmäß'ig dich besorgt. Wer sind sie, sprich,  
Für die dein Geist gewaltig sich erhebt ? (1886-8).

Iphigenie's heart quails:

Sie sind — sie scheinen — für Griechen halt' ich sie (1889).

Why does she falter ? Why does she not boldly announce at once that the strangers are her brother and his friend, and hold Thoas to his promise to release her ? Does her hesitancy not give grounds for the view that she never really intended to be frank and only gradually changes her mind ? Her words and her manner only serve to confirm Thoas in his suspicions:

Landsleute sind es ? und sie haben wohl  
Der Rückkehr schönes Bild in dir erneut ? (1890-1).

The interrogative form is, of course, mere sarcasm, for there can only be one answer. How could it be otherwise ? Iphigenie's reply, given 'nach einigem Stillschweigen', is almost defiant:

Hat denn zur unerhörten Tat der Mann  
Allein das Recht ? Drückt denn Unmögliches  
Nur er an die gewalt'ge Heldenbrust ? (1892-4).

The strangers had indeed stimulated anew her longing for home. But her aims now are infinitely greater: they embrace 'das Unmögliche'. She must confide all, if Thoas is to understand all, and she braces herself for the 'kühnes Unternehmen'. But we should be clear about this point: it is not wisdom or cunning which inspires her confession, but fear and the knowledge that Thoas so completely misunderstands the circumstances; she is stung into action by his unjust suspicion. It is too much to expect Thoas either to condone her past behaviour without knowing the cause, or to give his active cooperation to the realization of their aims without knowing about Apollo's oracle. Above all she realizes that all is lost if he does not fully and sympathetically appreciate all the facts. Like Orest, she might have said: 'Zwischen uns sei Wahrheit', or better still, 'die volle Wahrheit'.

On the brink of her confession Iphigenie falters at the thought of the terrible consequences, if Thoas should prove unworthy of her trust:

Ich werde großem Vorwurf nicht entgehn,  
Noch schwerem Übel, wenn es mir mißlingt;  
Allein euch leg' ich's auf die Kniee! Wenn  
Ihr wahrhaft seid, wie ihr gepriesen werdet,  
So zeigt's durch euern Beistand und verherrlicht  
Durch mich die Wahrheit! (1914-9).<sup>136</sup>

She discloses the plot. He will search for the strangers in vain, she states, for they have returned to their friends, who await them in their ship. The elder of the two, who was afflicted and is now healed, is Orest, her brother; the other is Pylades, his friend. She now briefly sums up the object of their journey to Tauris:

Apoll schickt sie von Delphi diesem Ufer  
Mit göttlichen Befehlen zu, das Bild  
Dianens wegzurauen und zu ihm  
Die Schwester hinzubringen, und dafür  
Verspricht er dem von Furien Verfolgten,  
Des Mutterblutes Schuldigen, Befreiung (1928-33).

It will be noticed that not only does Iphigenie still retain her faith in the literal meaning of the oracle and in the complete nature of Orest's cure (Pylades' 'frohe Botschaft' in Act IV, Scene iv, has evidently dispelled any lingering doubts), but she also seems to regard the plan as having been partially successfully carried out already. Why, then, should she consider the second appeal, which terminates her confession, necessary? And why should it be so defiant?

Uns beide hab' ich nun, die Überbliebenen  
 Von Tantals Haus, in deine Hand gelegt;  
 Verdirb uns, wenn du darfst! (1934-6).<sup>137</sup>

There is perhaps an echo here of the conclusion of Euripides' play, in which the prisoners successfully escape with the image, but, on being driven back to the shore by adverse winds, are released on the intervention of Pallas Athene. Why Euripides should have found a double escape necessary is not clear. Perhaps a Greek audience would delight in the victory of Greek craftiness over barbarian simplicity, yet would welcome divine authority for and blessing on the return of the image, virtually the theme of Euripides' play. No such divine seal on the action is required by Goethe's audience; but for Goethe's heroine the action must be carried out without deception and with the voluntary co-operation and blessing of Thoas. There is, too, I imagine, ever the thought in Iphigenie's mind, harking back to the original fable, that their escape, though successfully accomplished, may yet be frustrated: they may again fall into the hands of the barbarian. But there is also the knowledge that they act on divine authority. As Euripides' Thoas could not but obey the injunction of Pallas Athene, so Goethe's Thoas must take cognizance of the oracle of Apollo; in other words, he dare not, he cannot, destroy them. There is, moreover, in Iphigenie's wording of the oracle the first indication of the essential difference between Euripides' and Goethe's versions: though she still regards 'das Bild' and 'die Schwester' as one and the same, in mentioning the two separately she comes half-way to the oracle's true meaning. Her speech raises a further point: Orest, she states, is already cured of his 'Übel' (cf. ll. 1924-5); yet he is promised 'Befreiung' when the image is brought back to Greece (cf. ll. 1928-33 above). Pylades, it will be remembered attempted to explain the difficulty by suggesting that the Gods had bestowed the reward before the service was fully rendered, thus auguring their success. What Iphigenie thinks is not clear. Perhaps she is satisfied with Pylades' explanation. But at any rate she obviously believes that, cured or no, Orest must carry out the command of Apollo, before his 'Befreiung' becomes definite—he is still morally bound.

Thoas' reply is not one to inspire Iphigenie with confidence:

Du glaubst, es höre  
 Der rohe Skythe, der Barbar, die Stimme  
 Der Wahrheit und der Menschlichkeit, die Atreus,  
 Der Grieche, nicht vernahm? (1936-9).<sup>138</sup>

Yet what does it amount to? It is certainly not a peremptory

refusal, though it threatens to precede one. Yet I doubt if any man could have granted such requests without some hesitation; for he is asked at once to spare the lives of the strangers, to part with the image of his Goddess, and to liberate his priestess, whom he had hoped to make his Queen. Yet his words, intended for sarcasm, express a great truism and sum up Iphigenie's simple philosophy; as she puts it in her next speech: everyone, whether Greek or barbarian, in whose heart the source of life—pure feeling—springs freely, may hear the voice of truth and humanity:

Es hört sie jeder,  
Geboren unter jedem Himmel, dem  
Des Lebens Quelle durch den Busen rein  
Und ungehindert fließt (1939-42).<sup>180</sup>

Still Thoas remains silent, which strikes terror to her heart. If he contemplates their destruction, she pleads, then may she die first, for she will never be able to face her brother again. Thoas' silence, however, springs from no sinister motive. He fears that the strangers, playing upon her hopes and credulity, have deceived her. Iphigenie makes a last attempt to convince him:

Nein, o König, nein!  
Ich könnte hintergangen werden; diese  
Sind treu und wahr (1956-8).

She will consent to banishment, she states, if she is proved wrong; but if not, then he should set them all free; for Orest is the last of their race and she, too, has a mission to perform:

Laß mich mit reinem Herzen, reiner Hand  
Hinübergehn und unser Haus entschüßnen! (1968-9).

She does not explain how she imagines these virtues will off-set and expiate the curse, she only reminds him of his former promise to allow her to return home, if ever an opportunity should arise; now it is there. She ends with words which make a refusal impossible, or at least difficult:

Ein König sagt nicht, wie gemeine Menschen,  
Verlegen zu, daß er den Bittenden  
Auf einen Augenblick entferne, noch  
Verspricht er auf den Fall, den er nicht hofft;  
Dann fühlt er erst die Höhe seiner Würde,  
Wenn er den Harrenden beglücken kann (1973-8).

Thoas' reply shows that his resistance is crumbling:

Unwillig, wie sich Feuer gegen Wasser  
Im Kampfe wehrt und gischend seinen Feind  
Zu tilgen sucht, so wehret sich der Zorn  
In meinem Busen gegen deine Worte (1979-82).

But Iphigenie is not satisfied with a grudging acquiescence; his consent must be magnanimous and their parting must have his blessing:

O reiche mir die Hand zum Friedenszeichen ! (1987).

Thoas' mind, however, cannot attune itself so quickly to Iphigenie's impetuous and far-reaching demands:

Du forderst viel in einer kurzen Zeit (1988).

And on this note—rising confidence and hope in Iphigenie, in Thoas amazement at the realization that he is not proof against her appeal—the Scene comes to an end. As she puts it:

Der Zweifel ist's, der Gutes böse macht.

Bedenke nicht; gewähre, wie du's fühlst ! (1991-2).

#### ACT V, SCENE IV: THOAS, IPHIGENIE, OREST

THE importance of the two short Scenes iv and v is that they form a kind of bridge between the great dialogue between Thoas and Iphigenie, in which the latter exposes the plan inspired by the oracle, and the final Scene, in which Orest unravels the true meaning of the oracle, thus making the plan unnecessary. In Scene iv Iphigenie informs Orest that she has confessed all. His unsheathed sword discloses the fact that fighting between the Greeks and Scythians is in progress, and he implores her to make haste to escape, for they are betrayed. He little knows that their 'betrayal' goes back to her failure to deceive Arkas in Act IV. Both Thoas and Iphigenie object to his carrying a naked sword; the former because no one may do so unpunished in his presence, the latter because it is a desecration of the temple. Orest is thus given an opportunity to ask who it is that threatens him. Iphigenie replies:

Verehr in ihm

Den König, der mein zweiter Vater ward !

Verzeih' mir, Bruder ! doch mein kindlich Herz

Hat unser ganz Geschick in seine Hand

Gelegt. Gestanden hab' ich euern Anschlag

Und meine Seele vom Verrat gerettet (2003-8).

What was this betrayal or treason? Not the betrayal of which Orest speaks, but treason against her 'second father' and betrayal of her better self. She is satisfied that she has saved herself—the first part of her prayer: 'Rettet mich', is fulfilled—and she has reason to hope for the fulfilment of the second part,

too. Orest is quick to grasp the situation; Iphigenie, he realizes, has not renounced all hope of escape; she merely desires to accomplish it by other, nobler means. Hence his question:

Will er die Rückkehr friedlich uns gewähren ? (2009).

Iphigenie is not in a position to answer; Thoas has shown signs of acquiescing, but he has not committed himself definitely, and in any case Orest's naked sword makes further discussion impossible:

Dein blinkend Schwert verbietet mir die Antwort (2010).

Whereupon Orest at once obeys:

So sprich ! Du siehst, ich horche deinen Worten (2011).

## ACT V, SCENE V: THOAS, IPHIGENIE, OREST, PYLADES, ARKAS

SCENE v is even shorter. Iphigenie's 'Antwort' is interrupted by the arrival of Pylades, who also stresses the need for haste, but who, unlike Orest, recognizes in Thoas the person of the King. Why he should be able to do so, we are not told, but he is obviously taken aback by the 'Gespräch der Fürsten' (l. 2015). On his heels Arkas enters to announce the approaching end of the struggle and the capture of the Greek ship; one word from the King and it will be in flames. Thoas, however, commands an armistice, which Orest accepts and which gives the interval of peace necessary for the deliberations of Scene vi; Orest sums up the position with the words:

Ich nehm' es an. Geh', sammle, treuer Freund,  
Den Rest des Volkes ! harret still, welch Ende  
Die Götter unsern Taten zubereiten ! (2024-6).

## ACT V, SCENE VI: THOAS, IPHIGENIE, OREST

THE last Scene of the play deals with the unravelling of the true meaning of Apollo's oracle: the priestess, not Diana, proves to be 'die Schwester', who must be brought back to Greece; or, as Farquharson puts it, it is Iphigenie, who, in the place of the image, must return with 'das Bild', the conception of good and loving Gods, in her soul. Moreover, Orest's true interpretation

at once eliminates two difficulties, which have arisen: Thoas will not be required to forego possession of the image, and there is consequently no need for further disagreement or for recriminations about recent misunderstandings.

Iphigenie opens the Scene with an appeal to Thoas for justice and to Orest for restraint. Thoas voices his old suspicions: what proof is there that the stranger is Agamemnon's son and Iphigenie's brother? Orest points to his sword, with which his father had fought at Troy, and proposes that by the sword the issue shall be decided: a Scythian noble should be chosen as his opponent. To Thoas' objection that this is a right which strangers have never enjoyed in Tauris, Orest's rejoinder is that the custom should begin with them. Moreover, he will fight for all future strangers: on the result of their duel the fate of all will depend.

The proposal leads Thoas to regard Orest as not unworthy of the descent to which he lays claim, and he offers himself as his opponent. But Iphigenie objects: a combat between her brother and her friend, whatever the outcome, spells loss for her:

Denkt an mich und mein Geschick (2066).

There are, she maintains, other ways of obtaining a settlement: she points to a birthmark on Orest's right hand, which the priest had interpreted as an augury of 'eine schwere Tat', and to a scar on his forehead, the result of a fall, when a child, from Elektra's arms.<sup>140</sup> These, she states, she accepts as signs; consequently she is satisfied that she is not being lured from the safe sanctuary of the temple by robbers. The remark strikes us as strange. In the recognition Scene (III, i) there is no indication of any doubt or suspicion on her part. This is, of course, a minor point—we can well imagine that such doubts, among the others, assailed her—but the remark, at any rate, serves to emphasize the greater personal risk and danger she runs: if, therefore, she can believe in the identity of the strangers, it should not be impossible for Thoas to do so. She finally points to his likeness to Agamemnon and mentions the rejoicing of her own heart. Naturally Thoas is not thereby altogether convinced. And even if he overcomes his doubts and his wrath, he states, the attempted theft of the image makes peace impossible:

Und hübe deine Rede jeden Zweifel,  
Und bändigst' ich den Zorn in meiner Brust,  
So würden doch die Waffen zwischen uns  
Entscheiden müssen; Frieden seh' ich nicht.  
Sie sind gekommen, du bekennest selbst,  
Das heil'ge Bild der Göttin mir zu rauben.

Glaubt ihr, ich sehe dies gelassen an ?  
 Der Grieche wendet oft sein lüsterndes Auge  
 Den fernen Schätzen der Barbaren zu,  
 Dem goldenen Felle, Pferden, schönen Töchtern;  
 Doch führte sie Gewalt und List nicht immer  
 Mit den erlangten Gütern glücklich heim (2095-2106).<sup>141</sup>

Orest now makes his important speech, in which he reveals the true meaning of the oracle. It may perhaps be regarded as a kind of divine inspiration at the right moment.<sup>142</sup> I prefer to regard it as a normal and logical sequence in the course of their conversation—whether we wish to regard this sequence as directed by the Gods, is another matter. Thoas has hinted that he might be satisfied regarding Orest's identity and that perhaps they might be allowed to depart in peace; and Iphigenie's words in Scene iv seemed to hint that she, too, had hopes of an amicable settlement. But Thoas ends his speech with a scathing reference to covetous Greeks who, by force and cunning, had often sought, though not always successfully, to rob the barbarians of their possessions.<sup>143</sup> The implied accusation is, of course, unjust. Orest had cast no covetous eyes on the image, and, if he had had resort to 'Gewalt und List', it was because no other way of fulfilling a divine injunction seemed open. Now that the discovery of their plan has frustrated the hope of their returning to Greece with the image, how will they stand with regard to the oracle? To return empty-handed will mean that they have failed in their mission. But what exactly was their mission? To bring back 'die Schwester'. Instead of the image of Diana, they will return with Iphigenie! But Iphigenie, too, is 'die Schwester'; she, too, dwells in the sanctuary in Tauris 'wider Willen'. Could it be that Apollo had meant her? If so, nothing stands in the way of the fulfilment of the oracle, for the King has already hinted that they may perhaps be allowed to go; his wrath and suspicion will hardly persist, when he realizes that they had been misled by an oracle, which, like most oracles, was ambiguous and which in all good faith they had sought to obey. Some such train of thought, I imagine, has passed swiftly through Orest's mind as he listens to Thoas' speech. And consequently he is now able to declare:

Das Bild, o König, soll uns nicht entzweien !  
 Jetzt kennen wir den Irrtum, den ein Gott  
 Wie einen Schleier um das Haupt uns legte,  
 Da er den Weg hierher uns wandern hieß (2107-10).

The need for ambiguity in the oracle, if it were to act as a sign-post to Tauris, has already been pointed out; and so far



we have been given its message only in an indirect way and as it was understood by the Greeks. Orest now, for the first time, states its exact wording, together with his new and correct interpretation:

"Bringst du die Schwester, die an Tauris' Ufer  
Im Heiligtume wider Willen bleibt,  
Nach Griechenland, so löset sich der Fluch."  
Wir legten's von Apollens Schwester aus,  
Und er gedachte dich! Die strengen Bande  
Sind nun gelöst; du bist den Deinen wieder,  
Du Heilige, geschenkt (2113-9).

Moreover, Orest is now able to explain his apparently precipitate healing; for when he discovered Iphigenie and found peace in her arms, he had already virtually played his part in the divine plan. The rest depended, and still depends, on Iphigenie and Thoas, and if they do not fail, all will be well. His return with 'die Schwester' will follow as a matter of course. He again stresses his complete cure:

Von dir berührt,  
War ich geheilt; in deinen Armen faßte  
Das Übel mich mit allen seinen Klauen  
Zum letztenmal und schüttelte das Mark  
Entsetzlich mir zusammen; dann entfloß's  
Wie eine Schlange zu der Höhle. Neu  
Genieß' ich nun durch dich das weite Licht  
Des Tages (2119-26).

Finally, he reveals how Apollo's plan and Diana's intentions coincide. Iphigenie was saved by Diana from the altar and had been retained in her sanctuary at Tauris, so that, like a holy image, she should replace the Goddess and, returning to Greece, prove a blessing to her race:

Schön und herrlich zeigt sich mir  
Der Göttin Rat. Gleich einem heil'gen Bilde,  
Daran der Stadt unwandelbar Geschick  
Durch ein geheimes Götterwort gebannt ist,  
Nahm sie dich weg, die Schützerin des Hauses,  
Bewahrte dich in einer heil'gen Stille  
Zum Segen deines Bruders und der Deinen.  
Da alle Rettung auf der weiten Erde  
Verloren schien, giebst du uns alles wieder (2126-34).<sup>144</sup>

After an appeal to Thoas that he should not frustrate the obvious intention of the Gods, 'daß sie (Iphigenie) die Weihe des väterlichen Hauses nun vollbringe, Mich der entsühnten Halle wiedergebe' (ll. 2136-8), he reverts to the thought of 'Gewalt und

List', the veiled accusation which had stung him into unravelling the full truth. His final words defy Thoas, as a noble man, to prove himself other than worthy of the trust Iphigenie has placed in him:

Gewalt und List, der Männer höchster Ruhm,  
Wird durch die Wahrheit dieser hohen Seele  
Beschämt, und reines, kindliches Vertrauen  
Zu einem edeln Manne wird belohnt (2142-5).

The fact that neither Iphigenie nor Thoas comments on Orest's interpretation of Apollo's oracle or his revelation of 'der Göttin Rat' shows that they accept them without question. Iphigenie, in her next speech, eliminates further discussion and focuses their attention on the matter of immediate interest, their departure. And she gives Thoas a final reminder of his promise:

Denk an dein Wort und laß durch diese Rede  
Aus einem graden, treuen Munde dich  
Bewegen! Sieh uns an! Du hast nicht oft  
Zu solcher edeln Tat Gelegenheit.  
Versagen kannst du's nicht; gewähr' es bald! (2146-50).

Thoas consents; but Iphigenie is not content with a reluctant: 'So geht!' (l. 2151). They must part as friends and she must carry away his blessing:

Nicht so, mein König! Ohne Segen,  
In Widerwillen scheid' ich nicht von dir.  
Verbann' uns nicht! Ein freundlich Gastrecht walte  
Von dir zu uns, so sind wir nicht auf ewig  
Getrennt und abgeschieden. Wert und teuer,  
Wie mir mein Vater war, so bist du's mir,  
Und dieser Eindruck bleibt in meiner Seele.

Leb' wohl! und reiche mir

Zum Pfand der alten Freundschaft deine Rechte! (2151-73).

Whereupon Thoas, giving his hand, pronounces the 'holdes Wort' (l. 2169) which Iphigenie has twice suggested in her last speech, not to her alone, but to all of them:

Lebt wohl! (2174).

The blessing, with which Iphigenie is obviously satisfied, may strike us as somewhat cold and restrained. Something more generous might have given us a warmer glow, as the curtain falls or as we lay down the book.<sup>145</sup> We might perhaps have felt more satisfied if the end, so conciliatory for the Greeks, had been equally happy for the aged King. But would it have rung true? I doubt it. Thoas is the tragic figure in Goethe's play. His is the sacrifice and the future loneliness. He retains his Goddess, it is true, but he loses his priestess and his hopes of making her

his Queen are dashed to the ground for ever. It is unlikely that he gives a thought to the cares of state, for which their marriage was to provide a remedy; the threatened revolt of the nobles and the people's demand for the revival of human sacrifice are problems for which some other solution must be found. One thing is certain: he will now never willingly revert to human sacrifice. He cannot but have recognized the justice of Iphigenie's claim that the inspiration of a pure heart is the true interpreter of the will of the Gods and is to be trusted and obeyed more implicitly than any ancient law, however sanctified by custom. Her memory will surely influence his actions in the future no less powerfully than her presence had done in days gone by; more than ever will she be 'holy' to him. For the moment, however, he is stricken with grief. But the measure of his sorrow is the measure of his victory over himself. His victory—it is commensurate with Iphigenie's, though of a different kind—is that of a noble man. His is not the story of the barbarian's progress; for, had he been other than noble by nature, such a victory would never have been possible. We leave him, then, weighed down by grief and by the magnitude of the sacrifice he has voluntarily made. It is no moment, and he is in no mood, for heroic speeches; and Iphigenie, appreciating his distress, is happy—so far as she can be happy on parting finally from such a friend—with the brief blessing and farewell he is able to pronounce.

## NOTES TO ACT I

<sup>1</sup> Herman Grimm points out that Iphigenie's inability to adapt herself to her surroundings must have added to her dilemma when faced by the King's proposal of marriage later: 'Ihre Worte: "Und es gewöhnt sich nicht mein Geist hierher," lassen uns ihre vergebens gemachten Versuche, sich zu gewöhnen, und ihren Schrecken empfinden, als Arkas, der vertraute alte Ratgeber des Königs, jetzt vor ihr steht und im Namen des Königs sie auffordert, sich an diese skythischen Gestade durch eine Vermählung für immer nun zu fesseln' (*Fragmente, Berlin*, 1900, p. 43).

<sup>2</sup> In the first version we find these lines as: 'Denn mein Verlangen steht hinüber nach dem schönen Lande der Griechen, und immer möchte' ich über's Meer hinüber, das Schicksal meiner Vielgeliebten theilen' (Weimar Edition, I, 39, p. 323). Goethe began work on the final version on the shores of Lake Garda, of which he gives the following account in the *Italienische Reise*: 'Am Gardasee, als der gewaltige Mittagswind die Wellen ans Ufer trieb, wo ich wenigstens so allein war als meine Heldin am Gestade von Tauris, zog ich die ersten Linien der neuen Bearbeitung, die ich in Verona, Vicenz, Padua, am fleißigsten aber in Venedig fortsetzte' (I, 30, p. 245). To Goethe's analogy of his loneliness at Lake Garda and that of Iphigenie at Tauris, we may add the parallel of *his* longing for Italy and *her* longing for Greece. In the *Campagne in Frankreich, Zwischenrede*, he writes: 'Das Ziel meiner innigsten Sehnsucht, deren Qual mein ganzes Inneres erfüllte, war Italien, dessen Bild und Gleichniß mir viele Jahre vergebens vorschwebte, bis ich endlich durch kühnen Entschluß die wirkliche Gegenwart zu fassen mich erdreisete' (I, 33, pp. 187-8). And in the *Italienische Reise* he further states: 'Jetzt sondere ich Iphigenien aus dem Paket und nehme sie mit in das schöne warme Land als Begleiterin' (I, 30, p. 27).

<sup>3</sup> Euripides' Iphigenia, too, stresses her loneliness: 'Now I dwell in exile on the barren shores of an inhospitable sea, unwedded, childless, homeless, friendless' (p. 60; ll. 218-20). Iphigenie's subsequent soliloquy, especially her line: 'Wie eng gebunden ist des Weibes Glück' (l. 29), may have been prompted by Goethe's reading of Euripides' *Medea* (ll. 230 ff.) and *Andromache* (ll. 213 ff.).

<sup>4</sup> It is significant that in her reference to Klytämnestra as 'die Gattin', instead of 'die Mutter', Iphigenie gives no indication of any attachment; there is thus nothing to jar with her later

condemnation of her mother (Act III, Sc. i). She leaves us in no doubt concerning her admiration and affection for her father, in spite of the events which took place at Aulis. We find the same reluctance in Euripides' *Orestes* to use the word *mother*. In the *Orestes* he addresses his maternal grandfather, Tyndareus, thus: 'Now thy daughter—*mother* I blush to call her—was engaged in secret intrigues with a lover' (p. 296, ll. 557–8). And in Sophocles' *Electra* the heroine remarks: 'A mother—in name; but no mother in her deeds' (l. 1194).

<sup>5</sup> A. Bielschowsky points out that Iphigenie always turns to the Gods in emotional crises: 'Bei einer solchen Seele, die immer dem Himmlischen, dem Ewigen zugewandt ist, ist es nur natürlich, daß die stärksten Affekte in einer Anrufung der Götter sich entladen' (Goethe, ed. 1922, p. 430). See also my article on *Four Prayers in Goethe's Iphigenie*, *German Studies* (Oxford, 1938, p. 33).

<sup>6</sup> It may be argued that our pleasure is impaired by an advance knowledge of the *dénouement*, a view to which I cannot subscribe. The element of surprise in works which we read again and again, lies not in the plot, but in the ever new discoveries we make in their aesthetic beauty and ethical depth. In *Faust*, for example, even at a first reading, we know after the *Wette* in the *Prolog im Himmel* that the end will be the hero's salvation, or, at least, certainly not his damnation.

<sup>7</sup> 'Arkas und Pylades, jeder möchte ihr zu dem raten, was ihm für seine Verhältnisse das Beste zu sein scheint. . . . Der eine ist ihr Fleisch und Blut gewordenes Gewissen, der andere die verkörperte Sehnsucht ihres heldenhaften Herzens' (Steinweg, p. 37).

<sup>8</sup> In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, too, the priestess appears to say: 'Never yet the altar of the Goddess has been stained with Achaian blood' (p. 61; ll. 258–9). But what happened to the Achaian prisoners who wrote the letter for her (p. 70, ll. 585 ff.)? Goethe is explicit on the point: the lack of sacrifice is due entirely to Iphigenie's influence.

<sup>9</sup> Bittmann sees in her reply, not evasion, but a simple statement of the truth, for she is not an ordinary woman, but Diana's priestess: 'Mit diesen Worten sagt sie dem Könige die Wahrheit, indem sie als Dianens beschämte Priesterin und nicht Agamemnons Tochter vor dem Manne steht, der um ihre Hand wirbt. Dieser muß aber die Ausschlagung seiner Werbung erkennen, ohne daß sich Iphigenie direkt äußert' (p. 31).

<sup>10</sup> 'Et lorsque, à l'acte premier, la prêtresse raconte au roi les malheurs et les crimes de sa race . . . ce développement n'est pas un magnifique hors-d'œuvre; il a pour but de décourager Thoas

de son amour' (Paul Stapfer, *Etudes sur Goethe*, Paris, 1906, pp. 103-4).

<sup>11</sup> G. Schlosser sees in Iphigenie's sudden willingness to confide her family history, not only a determination to remain free for her future mission (p. 20), but also a desire to save the King from contact with the curse: 'Wird sie nicht einwilligen? Nein, sie schlägt es aus. Und warum? Aus Verehrung gegen den König. Sie will ihn nicht an ein Weib gebunden wissen, auf dessen Haus der furchtbare Fluch der Sünde und des Elends lastet. . . . Und nun erzählt sie ihm die Geschichte ihres Hauses, damit er wisse, um was für ein Weib er werbe, und davon abstehe' (p. 19). We can well credit Iphigenie with such a magnanimous impulse—indeed, she tells the King later: 'Glaub' es, darin bin ich dir vorzuziehen, daß ich dein Glück mehr als du selber kenne' (ll. 484-5)—but for the moment, it seems to me, she is so set on her great project, that all other considerations, provided they are morally right, are subservient to it.

<sup>12</sup> One can hardly be satisfied with Kuno Fischer's simple diagnosis of Iphigenie's reluctance to confide in Thoas: 'Sie tut es unfreiwillig, denn ihre Herkunft sollte, wie ihre Sendung, ihr Geheimnis bleiben' (p. 26).

<sup>13</sup> Bittmann gives a very different interpretation; he regards Iphigenie as still struggling with her fears and Thoas as delighted at the revelation of her noble descent: 'Der König staunt also zu seiner Zufriedenheit über Iphigeniens erhabene Abkunft, während diese, Schlimmes befürchtend, sprach: "Wüßtest du, wer vor dir steht, und welch verwünschtes Haupt du nährst und schüttest, ein Entsetzen faßte dein großes Herz mit selt'nem Schauer an." Denken wir uns diesen ganz unerwarteten Umschwung zögernder Furcht bei Iphigenie in das freudigste Erstaunen bei Thoas auf den äußeren Effekt bühnenmäßig herausgearbeitet, so wird unsere Vorstellung der großartigen Wirkung desselben kaum standhalten' (p. 35).

<sup>14</sup> Kuno Fischer is of opinion that Iphigenie's words indicate some light offence on the part of Tantalus: 'Dieser Tantalus hat die Ratschläge Jupiters nicht verraten—"er war kein Verräter", sagt Iphigenie—sondern mit ihnen gewetteifert, und in diesem Wettstreit kam von seiner Seite, was nicht ausbleiben konnte, ein Augenblick menschlicher Überhebung und Vermessenheit, welche die Götter nie zu verzeihen pflegen' (p. 32). Düntzer definitely specifies the offence: 'Goethe läßt den Thoas dessen (i.e., Tantalus) hohe Weisheit hervorheben, während Iphigenie den Vorwurf des Verrats, der Untreue, als eine bloße Dichtersage bezeichnet, und andeutet, die Götter hätten ihm an ihrer Tafel

nur eine niedere Stelle angewiesen, ihn als einen ihrer Untergebenen mißbraucht, er aber, einmal von ihnen herangezogen, habe sich ihnen gleich gestellt' (pp. 78-9). Fischer rightly refutes this interpretation: 'Ich möchte die Worte "zum Knecht zu groß" nicht so deuten, wie ich mich erinnere, sie irgendwo erklärt gefunden zu haben: daß Tantalus an der Göttertafel zu tief unten habe sitzen müssen und mit seinem Platz unzufrieden gewesen sei! Wenn ihm Jupiter seine Pläne anvertraut hat, so saß er dem Vater der Götter gewiß nahe genug. . . . Eine solche, völlig sinnlose und lächerliche Erklärung, nach welcher Tantalus mit der olympischen Tischordnung unzufrieden war, findet sich in Düntzers Erläuterungen' (p. 33). We may suggest, with regard to Fischer's criticism, that Tantalus might have gained Zeus' confidences elsewhere than at table, or that perhaps Zeus might have monopolized the conversation at table when speaking of his plans.

<sup>15</sup> Goethe seems to have had the version given by Electra in Euripides' *Orestes* in mind: 'Tantalus, for instance, once so prosperous—that Tantalus, the reputed son of Zeus hangs suspended in mid-air, quailing at the crag which looms above his head, paying this penalty, they say, for the shameful weakness he displayed in failing to keep a bridle on his lips, when admitted by the Gods, though he was but a mortal, to share the honours of their feasts like one of them' (p. 277, ll. 4-10).

<sup>16</sup> 'Doch auch die kühneren jenes Geschlechts, Tantalus, Ixion, Sisyphus, waren meine Heiligen' (*Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Book XV; I, 28, p. 314).

<sup>17</sup> Ch. Schrenpf regards ll. 315-35 as a real accusation, and it is this conception of the Gods, he believes, that explains Iphigenie's reversion to the *Parzenlied* mentality in her hour of trial (Act IV, Scene v): 'Also haben ihn eigentlich die Götter selbst, die ihn nachher so streng bestrafen, in Schuld gestürzt. Nicht anders verhält es sich mit seinen Nachkommen. . . . Diese schwere Anklage erhebt Iphigenie gegen die Götter, während sie schon aus ihrer Rettung einen viel günstigeren Begriff von ihrem Wesen und Walten erschlossen hat. . . . So ist auch nicht zu verwundern, daß in der Stunde der Anfechtung das grimme Lied wieder vor den Ohren tönt, das die Parzen sangen, als Tantalus von den Göttern verstoßen wurde' (p. 348).

<sup>18</sup> G. Witkowski dismisses this conception as un-modern: 'Ein solches Wirken des Schicksals, das erbarmungslos den Unschuldigen um der Sünden der Väter willen verfolgt, erkennen wir nicht an; Goethe begründet deshalb die Greuel aus den gemeinsamen, sich naturgemäß immer steigenden Eigenschaften

des wilden Stammes' (*Das Leben Goethes*, Berlin, 1932, p. 234). Since the 'Greuel' would probably never have been committed, but for the fact that the Gods had denied the 'wilder Stamm' the necessary saving virtues, we must hold them responsible for the conditions which brought forth the 'Greuel'. Nor can I agree with Witkowski's main thesis; it matters little whether we call it 'visitation on the children unto the seventh generation', or the laws of nature, or heredity, or by any other name, we *do* recognize such a force. Does not Christianity, which is *modern*, speak of 'original sin'?

<sup>19</sup> Thus Bittmann explains Iphigenie's confused views: '(Wir) gelangen zu der Überzeugung, daß Iphigenie zwar an das Walten des alten Fluches glaube, nachdem sie ja selbst als dessen Opfer dasteht; die Tradition des Fluches jedoch mit ihrer Anschauung vom Wesen der Gottheit nicht übereinstimme, diese Anschauung vielmehr ein liebevolles und gerechtes Walten der Gottheit und nicht den Glauben an deren Rachsucht zum Ausgangspunkte habe. Sie stellt die Tradition des Fluches gleichsam als eine veraltete Anschauung vom Wesen der Gottheit hin, deren sich bereits die Sage, sie tragisch umkleidend, bemächtigte' (pp. 37-8).

<sup>20</sup> Schlosser aptly sums up the point: 'Was hier von dem einen Geschlecht gesagt wird, das ist dasselbe, was die Offenbarung der Schrift tiefer und bestimmter von der ganzen Menschheit lehrt, daß aus dem uranfänglichen Falle der Stammeltern der Keim des Verderbens in das ganze Geschlecht gebracht wurde und wuchernd zu immer größerer Gewalt die Sünde hervortreibt. Mag's dem humanistischen Ohr des Kulturkämpfers noch so unangenehm klingen, Goethe, der, und zwar ganz im Sinne des Altertums, Iphigenie solche Worte sagen läßt, nähert sich damit dem, was in der Kirche die Lehre von der Erbsünde und der Erbschuld sagen will' (p. 32).

<sup>21</sup> Kuno Fischer points out that Goethe combines two things (which are fundamentally one and the same), namely, the doctrine of original sin and the law of heredity: 'Von Geschlecht zu Geschlecht wachsen durch ihre Forterbung die Leidenschaften und mit ihnen die Untaten. Was in der entarteten Menschheit nach der alten Kirchenlehre die Erbsünde heißt, nennt die heutige Entwicklungslehre im Guten wie im Bösen das Gesetz der Vererbung' (p. 25).

<sup>22</sup> The heroine's submissiveness is emphasized by Euripides. In *Iphigenia in Aulis*, after the moving, but vain, appeals to Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, she resigns herself to her fate: 'My death has been decreed; then let me die with honour,



vanquishing fear (ll. 1375-6). . . . If the divine Virgin require my sacrifice, dare I, weak mortal, withstand her will? A vain and empty thought (ll. 1395-7). . . . Raise the hymn to Artemis, the blessed Virgin! The Fates call on me and I give my blood and my life (ll. 1482-6). . . . Within those walls my days have passed, and now, of my own will, I journey into the night (ll. 1502-3). . . . "Father", she said, "I am here. For Argos and Achaia I offer myself freely as a victim to Artemis. Let them lead me to the altar" (ll. 1552-5). . . . She spoke, and all admired the heroic words and fearless bearing of the maiden' (pp. 43-8, ll. 1561-3). In his *Iphigenia in Tauris*, however, after her long exile, Iphigenia seems to bear something of a grudge: 'Ah! I cannot forget the sufferings which I then endured. I clung to my father's knees, I grasped his beard, I begged him: "O father, to an evil bridal thou hast brought me. . . . Behold thou hast ferried me by guile to a wedlock of blood"' (p. 64; ll. 361-5, 375-6). The wording of Goethe's text: 'Sie lockten mich ins Lager, sie rissen mich vor den Altar,' etc., may perhaps be reminiscent of the later attitude of Iphigenia.

<sup>23</sup> Schlosser thus sums up Iphigenie's attitude: 'Von der Verbindung mit dem König hält sie aus tiefstem Grunde doch nur die Gewalt zurück, die die höchste und stärkste in ihrem Bewußtsein ist, daß eine Göttin sie zu ihrem Eigentum erkoren, ihr ganzes Leben in Anspruch nimmt; die Hoffnung, daß sie wohl dazu bestimmt sei, ihrem unglücklichen Geschlecht noch einst zum Heil zu werden' (p. 20).

<sup>24</sup> Similar views are expressed by Euripides' Iphigenia: 'I blame the subtle devices of the Goddess, who forbids her altar to any mortal stained with blood . . . , whilst she herself takes joy in human sacrifice. Latona, the consort of Zeus was surely never the parent of such foolishness. I deem it incredible that Tantalus ever offered up to the Gods the flesh of children to their pleasure; rather the barbarians of this land, lusting for men's blood, charge their own guilt to the Goddess. I cannot believe that any of the Gods is evil' (p. 64; *Iph. Taur.*, ll. 380-91). The inconsistency of which Iphigenia complains is at bottom nothing but the inconsistency which must inevitably arise, when a primitive fable is treated by an author who has outgrown its ethical outlook. A similar inconsistency is observable in Goethe's Iphigenie, who regards her Gods as good, just and loving, but who still clings to her belief in the Tantalus curse and all its ramifications, finds excuses for her father for the sacrifice at Aulis, and, when sorely tried, almost reverts for a moment to the old conception of bloodthirsty Gods.

<sup>25</sup> Schlosser regards pique or anger as his sole motive: 'Der König Thoas fühlt sich durch ihre fortgesetzte Weigerung verletzt; und in seiner nun einmal leidenschaftlich erregten Natur, verkündigt er ihr seinen Entschluß, das alte Menschenopfer, das er mit Unrecht auf ihre Bitten versäumt habe, nunmehr wieder herzustellen. . . . Vergebens fleht sie sein Mitleid an; er ist nicht zu erweichen und nur bei den Göttern ist ihre Hoffnung' (p. 20).

<sup>26</sup> Bittmann regards Thoas' behaviour purely as an attempt at coercion: 'Er ordnet den Vollzug der alten Opfer wieder an, um Iphigenie zu überzeugen, wie gerade das heilige Amt ihren größten Widersacher bilde, sobald er in ihr nichts anders mehr als Dianens Priesterin zu sehen gesonnen sei . . . Thoas hält nun einmal an seiner Absicht fest, Iphigenie aus ihrer festesten Position, dem Priestertum, zu verdrängen, um sie zu überzeugen, daß ihr Lebensglück wirklich in seine Hand gelegt sei' (pp. 60-1). Bielschowsky holds a somewhat similar view: 'Diesem Manne, der so der maßvollsten und keuschesten Jungfrau begegnet, bloß weil sie ihm einen Wunsch versagt und einen erlaubten Wunsch ausspricht, diesem sollten wir nicht zutrauen, daß er rücksichtslos den Widerstand der Priesterin brechen werde?' (*Goethe*, ed. 1922, I, p. 426).

<sup>27</sup> Bielschowsky remarks: 'Thoas war von Haus aus hart, so daß das Volk schwer seine Herrschaft fühlte' (Arkas, of course, states that the yoke had been 'erleichtert' since Iphigenie's arrival in Tauris, ll. 133-7). 'Er ist äußerst reizbar und vergißt, wenn er gereizt wird, sich weit, wird heftig, bitter, höhnisch auch gegenüber der schwachen Frau, der heiligen Priesterin' (*Goethe*, I, p. 426).

<sup>28</sup> This is Steinweg's interpretation: 'Wenn Iphigenie seinem festen Willen, sie zu besitzen, nicht entspricht, dann steht zu befürchten, daß er in sein Barbarentum zurückfällt. So meint wenigstens Arkas. . . . Wo aber ist der König, noch dazu in seinen Jahren, der es gelassen ertrüge, wenn seine Werbung, auf die er all seine Hoffnungen gesetzt hat, ausgeschlagen wird? Hier muß der Rückschlag eintreten, den Arkas befürchtete . . . Ich bin ein Mensch, bekennt er auf ihren Vorwurf hin, und hätte doch sagen müssen: ein Barbar . . . Iphigenie soll also tun, was ihr, wie er weiß, Schauder erregt. Das war Barbarenrache!' (pp. 42-3). One must, I think, be careful to distinguish between 'Barbarentum' as (a) adhering to the belief in, and practice of, human sacrifice, and (b) mere cruelty. If Arkas feared a relapse on Thoas' part, it was into the former only, and in this respect the enlightened Greeks, too, were 'Barbaren'. His 'Barbaren-

rache', Steinweg elsewhere declares, simply amounts to coercion: 'Der Mächtige ist gereizt, und, um einen Druck auf Iphigenie auszuüben, befiehlt er, daß der durch sie in Vergessenheit geratene Brauch der Menschenopfer sofort wieder aufgenommen werde' (p. 10).

<sup>29</sup> Düntzer doubts Thoas' honesty here: 'Den Vorwand hierzu bietet das angebliche Murren des Volkes, das in dem neulichen Unfall, wo der letzte Sohn des Königs im Kampfe gegen die Feinde gefallen, eine Strafe der Göttin wegen Unterlassung der schuldigen Opfer sehe: die wirkliche Ursache liegt im Zorn des Königs, daß Iphigenie in eigenwilligem Stolz seine Hand ausschlage' (p. 48). Düntzer, be it noted, does not doubt the statement about the death of Thoas' son, but he speaks of the consequent 'Murren des Volkes' as 'angeblich', which merely serves as a 'Vorwand'. Would such subterfuge and deception be necessary for an autocratic ruler? Would Thoas and Arkas be likely to conspire in order that their respective accounts should coincide? Iphigenie seems to believe him—her silence may even indicate that she already knows the facts—and Goethe, I think, intended us, too, to accept Thoas' statement as true. There is certainly nothing in Goethe's text to justify our suspecting the King of any misrepresentation whatsoever.

<sup>30</sup> Bielschowsky wonders if Thoas is not using his religion as an excuse: 'Konnte er nicht jede Härte vor seinem Gewissen mit den Geboten der Religion entschuldigen?' (*Goethe*, ed., 1922, I, p. 427). Stapfer, I think, comes nearer the truth (though he is surely wrong in making the question of human sacrifice the touchstone of Barbarism): 'Les Scythes, sous sa bonne influence, se civilisent en même temps que leur roi. Les sacrifices humains deviennent incompatibles avec les mœurs épurées et adoucies. Cependant la barbarie n'est encore qu'à demi vaincue. Thoas, rendu furieux par le sage refus de la jeune fille, qui repousse dignement l'offre de sa main, remet en vigueur l'ancienne loi du pays' (*Etudes sur Goethe*, p. 121).

<sup>31</sup> Steinweg, on the other hand, believes that Thoas had, under Iphigenie's influence, come to abhor human sacrifice: 'Hat Iphigeniens lichtet Reich über den König mit ihrer Absage seine Kraft verloren? Thoas' Hoffnung ist dahin, und wenn erst der Zorn die Seele eines Gewalthabers erfüllt, dann macht er sich wohl ein Gesetz aus dem, was er sonst verabscheut' (p. 43). This is contradictory to all we are told in Goethe's text regarding Thoas' religious views.

<sup>32</sup> Bittmann is of opinion that Iphigenie never really contemplates the possibility of shedding human blood: 'Könnte Iphi-

genie jemals bewogen werden, bei der blutigen Opferung eines Menschen mitzuwirken? Gewiß nicht! Gerade bei dem Gedanken an die Möglichkeit eines Zwanges hiezu triumphiert ihre Seele schon im vorherein, weil sie sich ganz deutlich bewußt ist, daß sie nur im Einklange mit ihrer Gottheit über Thoas siegen könne' (p. 63). I can find no triumph in these words of Iphigenie; there is hope—she gives her reasons for her hope at the end of her monologue—and there is definitely apprehension. The fact that she envisages her state of mind after the sacrifice, shows that she does not regard it as outside the range of possibility.

<sup>33</sup> Düntzer aptly remarks: 'Abweichend von Euripides nimmt Goethe an, die Priesterin selbst müsse die Opferung vollziehen, damit ihre Not um so ärger werde, da ihre Hand Blut vergießen soll' (p. 48).

<sup>34</sup> Kuno Fischer sums up: 'Sie glaubt sich gerettet, um die Retterin ihres Hauses zu werden: dies sei ihre geheimnisvolle Sendung, die nur erfüllt werden könne, wenn sie die eigene Seele rein und schuldlos erhalte' (p. 20).

<sup>35</sup> Steinweg, too, points out the clash between Iphigenie's duties as priestess and her hopes regarding her mission: 'Sie soll sich im heiligen Dienst die Hände beflecken und sie so zur künftigen Weihe ihres Hauses verderben!' (p. 19). And again: 'Nachdem sie dieser Entweihung ihrer Person (i.e., marriage with Thoas) entgangen ist, soll sie sich, nun gerade im Dienste der Göttin, die ihr Blut nicht wollte, die Hände mit Mord beflecken und sich schließlich zu ihrem reinen Werke untauglich machen' (p. 29).

## NOTES TO ACT II

<sup>36</sup> Steinweg remarks: 'Die Exposition ist hiermit abgeschlossen (II. i), und mit ihr ist auch die Hauptaufgabe der dramatischen Perspektive erledigt, denn nun soll die Handlung die angedeutete Richtung einhalten, wobei sich nur noch mehr oder weniger Gelegenheit zu weiteren Hinweisen auf Kommendes finden wird' (p. 53-4). And Düntzer: 'Man hat unserer Szene vorgeworfen, sie bringe die Handlung nicht besonders vorwärts. Aber sie schließt genau an das Ende des vorigen Aufzugs und bestimmt das Verhalten der beiden Gefangenen der Priesterin gegenüber. . . . Hierbei findet der Dichter Gelegenheit, die Lage der Freunde, ihren Charakter und ihre frühere Geschichte uns, so weit es zur Auffassung der Handlung nötig ist, ebenso klar zu vergegenwärtigen, wie es im ersten Aufzug bei Iphigenien ihm gelungen ist' (p. 100).

<sup>37</sup> Steinweg remarks: 'Pylades, der so fest auf die Götter baut, hat ihren Spruch doch stets nur nach seiner Auffassung im Kopf. Ihm sind ihre Worte nicht zweideutig. Wie der Soldat an höherem Auftrag nicht deutelt, so bleibt ihm da, wo die Götter befehlen, erst recht nichts zu überlegen übrig' (p. 38).

<sup>38</sup> Steinweg writes: 'Wenn Pylades hinzufügt: "der Götter Worte sind nicht doppelsinnig", so ist das insofern auffällig, als hier an eine Zweideutigkeit überhaupt noch nicht gedacht werden kann' (p. 49). Surely Pylades' remark cannot be regarded as strange in view of Orest's refusal to accept any longer the literal, or what is to Pylades the obvious, meaning of the oracle; he therefore seeks to counter Orest's pessimism with the strongest possible arguments.

<sup>39</sup> This is obviously Düntzer's view: 'Gerade im Gegensatz zum Orest, dessen Glauben er beleben will, zeigt sich Pylades hier viel gläubiger, als er im Grunde ist' (p. 92).

<sup>40</sup> Schrenpf holds the opposite view. He writes, 'Er erhält die Zusicherung, daß er im Heiligtum der Schwester zu Tauris Hilfe finden werde. Mit nur halbem Vertrauen auf das Wort des Gottes, und fast mehr nach dem Tode sich sehnend als nach Genesung, tritt er die Fahrt nach Tauris an. Darum findet er es bloß richtig, daß er dort gefangen genommen wird, um als Opfer geschlachtet zu werden; und daß die Pricsterin, die ihn töten soll, sich als seine tot geglaubte Schwester zu erkennen gibt' (p. 344).

<sup>41</sup> The story, according to Greek sources, is that Orestes was to restore the image to Attica, not to Delphi. Obviously Goethe had the latter place in mind, according to the account given by Iphigenie to Thoas in Act V, Scene iii (ll. 1928-30). I can only suggest that, as it is a point of little or no importance to a modern audience, Goethe thought fit to aim at geographical simplicity.

<sup>42</sup> Bittmann writes: 'Eines Umstandes müssen wir noch gedenken: Diana errettete Iphigenie, die noch Schuldlose, auf Tauris; der ersteren Bruder, Apollo, heißt Orest, den Schuldbeladenen, gleichfalls nach Tauris ziehen, um dort seine Entsühnung zu erlangen' (p. 67). As is pointed out above, this was only part of the Gods' plan.

<sup>43</sup> Kuno Fischer justly remarks: 'Unter den schuldbeladenen Tantaliden ist Orestes der einzige, den die Furien verfolgen. Wir hören nicht, daß die Untaten des Pelops, Thyestes und Atreus sie geweckt haben; hier war jeder Frevel gesättigte Gier, die neue Frevel gebär. Auch von der Vermessenheit, jener Urschuld des Tantalus, ist nichts in Orest' (p. 37).

<sup>41</sup> This is the only explanation that Steinweg, too, can suggest: 'Von der Schwester Wesen fließt Balsam auf Tausende. Ein Gott brachte sie an unwirtbare Ufer, wo sie einem ganzen Volke Quelle eines neuen Glückes wurde und den Freunden Heil und Rückkehr bereitete. Und deshalb schickt auch der Gott den suchbeladenen Bruder dort hin, daß er gleichen Segens teilhaftig werde. Den Fluch, den die Gotter über ein ganzes Geschlecht gebracht hatten, mußten sie auch wieder lösen, und die Zeit dazu war jetzt gekommen' (pp. 32-3).

<sup>45</sup> Weimar Edition I, 30, pp. 245-6.

<sup>46</sup> Weimar Edition I, 30, pp. 268-9.

<sup>47</sup> Weimar Edition I, 30, pp. 167-8.

<sup>48</sup> Düntzer holds the opposite view: 'Daß der ernste Dramatiker auch die fremdesten Völker sich auf der Bühne ohne weiteres verstehen läßt, ist eine Forderung der Kunst, welche wir eben so *unbedenklich zugestehen müssen als den Gesang in der Oper*. Auch kann es keinen Anstoß erregen, wenn in unserem deutschen Stücke darauf hingewiesen wird, daß die Personen Griechisch sprechen; die Bedenken, ob Iphigenie mit Thoas und Arkas Griechisch oder Scythisch spreche und wie sich diese am Anfange miteinander verständigt oder woher Iphigenie Kenntnis der scythischen Sprache erhalten, läßt der dichterische Geist des Dramas nicht aufkommen' (p. 101). This would all be quite true, if Goethe himself had not raised the question. It would be equally out of place for a character in an opera to draw attention to his mode of communication—speech, song, recitative, etc. Such allusions to the technique, though in conformity with Romantic theory and practice, expose the unreality of art and detract from its enjoyment.

<sup>49</sup> The reason that Bittmann ascribes to Iphigenie for her reluctance is not convincing: 'Muß es nicht unsere Bewunderung erregen, daß Iphigenie auch jetzt . . . dem Griechen bloß als Priesterin Dianas gelten will? Gewiß nicht! Ihr Priestertum ist das Symbol ihres seelischen Einklangs mit der Gottheit, und, diesen Einklang zu wahren, dient ihr die Klugheit, die auf jenen Willen droben lauscht' (p. 105).

<sup>50</sup> Bittmann suggests a very different reason for Pylades' deception: 'Jetzt können wir versuchen, uns den Grund zu Pyladens fingierte Erzählung zu erklären. . . . Wußte er nun, wie die Griechin, das fremde, göttergleiche Weib, die jenes blutige Gesetz gefesselt hält, von der man glaubt, sie entspringe dem Stamme der Amazonen und sei geflohen, um einem großen Unheile zu entgehen, sich den Gefangenen gegenüber verhalten

werde, wenn sie erfährt einer derselben sei Agamemnons Sohn? Konnte die Abstammung Orestens von dem großen Führer der Griechen gen Troja . . . nicht leicht eine Ursache bilden, den Gefangenen zu grollen, weil Iphigenien vielleicht infolge dieser Kämpfe selbst ein großes Unheil gedroht hatte?' (p. 112). Bittmann seems to have overlooked the fact that Pylades persists in his deception even after he realizes that the priestess honours 'dieses Haus' (l. 883) and may possibly have even known Agamemnon (l. 921).

<sup>51</sup> Steinweg, on the other hand, regards Pylades' deception as inspired by no other motive than anxiety for his friend, and Iphigenie as forgetful of his warning: 'Eine Mutter kann nicht rührender für ihr Kind bitten, als er die Priesterin, daß sie Erbarmen haben möchte mit dem Zustand seines Bruders und ihn schonen: "O sag' ihm bald ein gutes, holdes Wort!"—Bat nicht auch Arkas um Schonung seines Herrn und gleicht ihm Pylades nicht auch noch darin, daß er wie jener durch Iphigenien enttäuscht wird, die sein sorgliches Wort so schnell vergißt, daß gerade das eintritt, was seine Warnung verhindern sollte?' (p. 40). As has been shown above, the real object of Pylades' warning was to prevent Iphigenie from discovering the truth; and, as we shall see later, Orest's 'fieberhafter Wahnsinn' arises from another cause altogether. Nor is Steinweg's analogy of Arkas' and Pylades' appeals just. Arkas practised no deception; he advised what he believed was in the interests of his master, of the people, and of Iphigenie herself; and his disappointment springs from the fact, made plain to him by Iphigenie at the outset, that she is unable to accede fully to his appeal. We may contrast with Steinweg's interpretation that of Düntzer, which, so far as it goes, coincides with the one I have set forth: 'Die Entdeckung des wirklichen Sachverhalts sucht er (Pylades) durch die Bitte zu verhindern, daß sie des Bruders schöne, ihn nicht durch Erinnerung an seine Schuld aufrege' (p. 104). Unfortunately he has nothing to say regarding Iphigenie's 'disobedience', though he is definite about the impulse which prompts it: 'Die schreckliche Bewegung, womit Orest die zerrüttende Qual der Furien schildert, muß Iphigenien tiefstes Mitleid mit dem Armen empfinden lassen, da sie weiß, daß auch ihren Bruder diese gräßlichen Rachegöttinnen verfolgen' (p. 119).

<sup>52</sup> Düntzer remarks: 'Goethe denkt sich wohl, Aegisth habe den Agamemnon mit einer Axt erschlagen' (p. 107). In Sophocles and Euripides the fatal weapon is an axe, in Aeschylus it is a sword. Also in his sketch for his *Iphigenie in Delphi*, Goethe speaks of 'die grausame Axt, die so viel Unheil in Pelops Hause

angerichtet' (I, 39, p. 167; see p. 55 above). In the first version of *Iphigenie auf Tauris* the wording is '... erstach Ägisth ihn' (I, 30, p. 355), but the nature of the weapon is not indicated. In the final version 'erstach' is replaced by 'schlug'—probably in its wider sense of 'to strike dead'—while in Act III Orest relates that he slew his mother with 'jener alte Dolch, der schon in Tantals Hause grimmig wütete' (ll. 1036-7). In her narrative of the atrocities perpetrated by her forefathers (ll. 315-432), Iphigenie does not mention any particular weapon.

<sup>53</sup> According to Aeschylus Clytemnestra herself slew her husband with three blows—Euripides and Sophocles made Aegisthus share in the murder—and she publicly boasts of her vengeance and of her immoral life. In these respects Goethe has eliminated the harshness of her character: it is definitely Ägisth who strikes the fatal blow, and no mention is made of Klytämnestra's boasts. Goethe, we may assume, had no wish to blacken her character more than was necessary for his plot, or affect thereby our esteem for her children. But he does stress what he deems to be necessary, namely, her loveless nature and her shameless life.

<sup>54</sup> Sophocles leaves us in no doubt as to Clytemnestra's real motive. The Chorus in *Electra* chant: 'Guile was the plotter, lust the slayer, dread parents of a dreadful shape' (ll. 197-9); and later Electra declares: 'When I see the outrage that crowns all, the murderer in our father's bed at our wretched mother's side, if mother she should be called, who is his wife' (ll. 271-4).

<sup>55</sup> In Euripides, Iphigenia, before she dies, makes the following appeal to her mother:

*Clyt.* Is there aught that I can do at Argos for your pleasure?

*Iph.* Bear no hate against my father, no rancour towards your husband.

*Clyt.* For your dear sake he must run a bitter course.

*Iph.* For Hellas' sake, against his will, he has destroyed my life (*Iph. Aul.*, p. 45; ll. 1453-6).

<sup>56</sup> The following is Clytemnestra's own account of her crime in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*:

'I set around, with baffling intricacies like a fisher's net, an evil wealth of hangings. Twice there I smote him: twice he groaned, and his limbs gave way. And when he was down, I added a third blow, a prayerful offering to subterranean Zeus, safe keeper of the dead. . . . For my part I exult. . . . So heinous was the crime against household peace wherewith he charged the cup of cursing in his home, that now he hath drained on his return. . . . He gave to the death his own child, the precious travail



of my womb, to charm away a Thracian wind. . . . I look not to inhabit halls of fear, so long as fire upon my hearth is kindled by Aegisthus, loyal as heretofore in his love for me' (pp. 49-50; ll 1382-7, 1394, 1397-8, 1417-8, 1434-6).

<sup>57</sup> The more usual interpretation is that Iphigenie accepts Pylades' statement at its face value. Steinweg writes: 'Mußte sie noch eben zu ihrem unendlichen Schmerz erfahren, daß sie, wenn auch unschuldig, mit schuld an ihres Vaters schmachvollem Tod war . . .' (p. 20). And Düntzer: 'Iphigenie erfährt, daß ihre eigene Opferung die erste Veranlassung zur grausamen Tat gegeben. Dieser letztere Umstand ergreift sie nach allem, was vorhergegangen, so schrecklich, daß sie, um den Ausdruck des sie bewältigenden Schmerzes zu verbergen, sich mit ihrem Gewande das Gesicht verhüllt und weggeht' (pp. 107-8). Bittmann imagines that Iphigenie seeks, though unsuccessfully, to regard her mother as having been seduced by Ägisth: 'Als zärtliche Tochter mochte sie sich Klytämnestra gern als Verführte denken, weshalb sich ihr Augenmerk vorerst auf Ägisth richtet: "Und welchen Lohn erhielt der Mitverschworene?" Was also veranlaßte Ägisth zu dieser Tat? Pylades erwiedert: "Ein Reich und Bett, das er schon besaß." So erfüllt sich Iphigeniens Hoffnung, die Mutter als Verführte hinstellen zu können, nicht' (pp. 116-7). When Bittmann follows the text more closely, he justly remarks: 'Iphigenie konnte bei ihrer jetzigen Kenntnis von der Sachlage bloß Einen Beweggrund zur Verübung der schweren Tat deutlich erkennen: und diesen spricht sie aus: "So trieb zur Schandtät eine böse Lust"' (p. 117).

Goethe seems to have had the version of this incident as given in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* in mind, in which Clytemnestra is represented as excusing herself for her crime by dwelling on the sacrifice of her daughter, but is clearly motivated only by a desire to continue her guilty life with Aegisthus. After she publicly boasts that she has committed the deed by her own hand and Aegisthus claims to have 'knit the whole framework of this plan of enmity' (p. 55; l. 1609), the Chorus passes sentence: 'Woman! was this thy faithfulness to those newly returned from war? Entrusted with the home, did'st thou at once defile thy husband's bed and plot this murder against him, the army's lord?' (p. 56; ll. 1625-7). And the play ends with the significant words, spoken by Clytemnestra: 'Thou and I, ruling this house together with supreme authority, will make all well' (p. 58; ll. 1672-3).

Aeschylus gives his Clytemnestra an additional motive, that of jealousy of Cassandra, the young and beautiful daughter of King Priam, whom Agamemnon brought home with him as a

prisoner of war. Clytemnestra voices her hatred and jealousy: 'Low lies the wronger of my life, the darling of priests' daughters in the leaguer of Troy. And together with him this his captive, this woman-seer, his bedfellow and faithful mistress, this prophetess that beside him pressed the planks on ship-board! They are not baulked of their deserving. He died as I have told you; she, swan-like, having chanted her last, her dying song, lies there,—his lover, whom he brought as a luxurious side-dish and set-off to my proud marriage bed' (pp. 50-1; ll. 1438-47). The reason for the deletions is the same as for the alterations: Goethe at once wished to free Agamemnon of blame as far as possible and to deprive Klytämnestra of all valid excuse. He therefore ascribed to her the simple motive of 'eine böse Lust', which he found in the *Agamemnon*.

## NOTES TO ACT III

<sup>58</sup> Euripides' Iphigenia, too, welcomes Orestes as a compatriot before she is aware of his identity: 'How welcome is your coming since you hail from Argos' (p. 67; l. 515).

<sup>59</sup> Düntzer, too, suggests this as Iphigenie's reason for her silence, though he ignores her evasion of the same question when put to her by Pylades in the preceding Scene. I cannot, however, agree with his view that Orest now acts on Pylades' instructions: 'Pylades hatte den Orest aufgefordert, in das Geheimnis der Herkunft Iphigeniens zu dringen, aber sein eigenes Geschlecht ihr zu verheimlichen. Iphigenie zeigt sich geneigter gegen ihn als gegen seinen Bruder, doch muß sie zunächst weitere Nachricht vom Schicksal ihres Hauses haben, wobei sie ihre Herkunft zu verbergen sucht, um ja die volle Wahrheit zu erfahren' (p. 111). And again: 'So gestatten wir es dem Dichter gern, daß er am Anfang des dritten Aufzugs das inzwischen Geschehene übergeht. Pylades hat dem Orest mitgeteilt, was er der Priesterin berichtet habe, die eine Griechin aus hohem Hause und von Agamemnons Geschick tief gerührt sei; er hat ihn dann zu dieser treten lassen . . . womöglich weiteres zu erkunden' (p. 55). Bittmann seems to hold a similar view: 'Er (Pylades) hatte, bevor ihm Iphigenie entgegentrat, zu Oresten den Wunsch geäußert, ihn noch zu sprechen, ehe dieser der Priesterin gegenüber stehen werde. Daß diese Unterredung wirklich stattfand . . . offenbart uns Orest durch seine letzten zwei Fragen', i.e., ll. 949-51 (p. 122). The 'Unterredung' desired by Pylades in Act II, Scene i (ll. 796-7), may have taken place between Acts II

and III (as Düntzer and Bittmann suggest), in which Pylades would, no doubt, impart to his friend what information he had been able to gather; but we have no reason to believe that Orest now sets out to cross-examine the priestess at Pylades' request or that he had any knowledge of the deception practised upon Iphigenie in Act II. In addition to the 'Unterredung', Bittmann imagines another scene off the stage between Acts II and III, in which—naturally in a monologue—Iphigenie reviews *her* position: 'Waren wir bemüßigt, die stattgehabte Unterredung der beiden Freunde zwischen dem 2. und 3. Aufzuge festzustellen, dann dürfen wir auch Iphigeniens nicht vergessen, welche ihre Lage in dieser Zwischenzeit recht kummervoll überdachte; denn, während sie Pyladen vorhin jede weitere Frage nach ihrer Herkunft mit den Worten abschnitt: "die Priesterin . . . spricht mit dir", antwortet sie jetzt Oresten: "Du sollst mich kennen"' (p. 123). Iphigenie's gentler manner is not the outcome of a resolve; she herself gives a very satisfactory explanation later in the Scene (ll. 1185-7), namely, the call of blood. Steinweg, I think, justly sums up the position: 'Anders redet Iphigenie dem König gegenüber, anders vor Pylades, und noch anders mit Orest. Dem Freunde gegenüber kurz und gemessen, seine Neugier zurückhaltend: "Das laß dir genügen!"—Orest gegenüber, der doch die gleiche Frage nach ihrer Herkunft stellt, wie im Gefühl, daß sie sich nicht fremd sind: "Du sollst mich kennen!" Unbewußt spricht hier die Stimme des Blutes, und der Ton wird herzlicher als in der Szene vorher mit Pylades' (p. 56).

<sup>60</sup> Bittmann rightly points out that the interrogative form does not indicate doubt on Iphigenie's part; but I would hardly accept the special meaning he attaches to the word 'Tücke': 'Es ist nicht anzunehmen, daß Iphigenie diese Frage an Orest stelle, weil sie Pyladens Worten nicht glaube. Der Grund dieser Frage muß vielmehr in dem letzten Worte derselben, nämlich, "Tücke", enthalten sein. . . . Wenn nun Iphigenie fragt, ob "der Frauen und Ägisthens Tücke" Agamemnon den Tod bereiteten, dann will sie sich vergewisseren, daß wirklich der alte Fluch . . . in Tantals Hause fortgewirkt habe' (p. 124). On the contrary, Iphigenie has no illusions about the existence and continuance of the curse—this is a fundamental point in Goethe's play. Her words merely serve to inform Orest concerning the stage Pylades had reached in his narrative of the family history, and the interrogative form not only urges, but also presupposes, its continuation by Orest. The special importance of the word 'Tücke' is that it again shows Iphigenie's condemnation of Klytämnestra and Ägisth.

<sup>61</sup> In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, too, Iphigenia at first supposes the two Greeks to be brothers:

*Iph.* Are you brothers born, born of the same mother ?

*Pyl.* We are not brothers born, but friends (p. 67, ll. 497-8).

<sup>62</sup> In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* Aegisthus explicitly states that his part in Agamemnon's murder was revenge for the murder of his brothers: 'Thyestes, hapless man, came back, and, as a suppliant at the hearth, obtained security from immediate danger. . . . But in celebrating his return, with more zeal than kindness, Atreus, the wicked father of this dead man, professing to hold a sacrificial festival, set before my father a feast of his own children's flesh. . . . Thereof thou mayest behold the sequel in the death of him who now lies here. Who then could have a better right than I had to contrive this deed of blood ?' (p. 55; ll. 1587-8, 1590-3, 1603-4).

<sup>63</sup> Düntzer believes that it is Iphigenie's knowledge of the blood-relationship between Aegisth and Agamemnon (they are cousins) that causes her to view the murder as an outcome of the curse: 'Die Nachricht von dessen Ermordung muß ihr Orest noch einmal bestätigen, aber von neuem ergreift diese sie mit entsetzlicher Gewalt, obgleich sie den ersten Schmerz überwunden hat; erkennt sie ja in ihr die unaufhörlich im Geschlecht des Tantalus sich fortwälzende Blutschuld. Die sie gewaltsam erfassende Angst malt ihr dies gräßlich vor: wie Aegisth, des Thyest Sohn, den Atriden Agamemnon ermordete, so schaut sie in schrecklicher Ahnung die fernsten Nachkommen, in Folge der Greuel des Atreus und Thyest, von gleichem Fluch verfolgt' (p. 112). Düntzer makes no suggestion to explain why Goethe should have been so vague about a relationship, so well known to his heroine and of vital importance for her.

<sup>64</sup> In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* the Chorus remark in the presence of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus: 'Ah ! somewhere let us hope, Orestes sees the light, that with auspicious fortune he may return, and prove the unconquerable executioner of this pair' (p. 57; ll. 1646-8).

<sup>65</sup> This conception of a son's first duty being towards his father is inherent in the fable. In Aeschylus' *Eumenides* it is even suggested that the father is the *only* parent. At the trial of Orestes, Apollo declares: 'The mother is not the parent of the so-called child. She only nurses the embryo-germ entrusted to her. The begetter is the parent:—she keeps, as for a stranger-friend (if God prevent not birth), the young plant that is committed to her care' (p. 127; ll. 658-61). In declaring the conditions under which sentence shall be passed, the Goddess Athene

throws in her lot with the father: 'To me it falls to pronounce judgment last. Herewith I add my vote to the side of Orestes. I have no mother who brought me forth. With my whole spirit, in everything I approve the male, except for marriage. Above all I take a father's part. It follows that I shall not care so much for the death of a wife that slew her lord, the family's rightful head. Now, even should this trial issue in an equality of balloting, Orestes wins' (p. 130; ll. 734-42). The Chorus of Erinyes, less concerned with truth than with vengeance, insist that blood-relationship *does* exist between mother and son:

*Chorus.* She (Clytemnestra) was bound by no ties of blood to the person whom she slew.

*Orestes.* But I, you think, am the blood-relation of my mother?

*Chorus.* Would'st thou renounce relationship to thy mother?

What blood-bond is so dear? (p. 125; ll. 605-8).

On Orestes' appealing to Apollo 'to bear witness', the latter declares that his command to Orestes to avenge his father had the sanction of Zeus, 'the father of Olympian Gods'. He thus gives the lie to the Erinyes' claim (pp. 125-6, ll. 609, 618).

Also in Euripides' *Orestes* Orestes insists in a conversation with his grandfather, Tyndareus, that he is a child of his father *only*: 'My crime is, I slew my mother; yet on another count this is no crime, being vengeance for my father. What ought I to have done? Set one thing against another. My father begat me; thy daughter gave me birth, being the field that received the seed from another; for without a sire no child would ever be born. So I reasoned thus: I ought to stand by the author of my being, rather than the woman who undertook to rear me' (pp. 295-6, ll. 546-7, 551-6).

<sup>66</sup> In Aeschylus, Strophius was merely Agamemnon's brother-in-arms. According to Euripides, however, Strophius' wife was a sister of Agamemnon, whose name is given by later dramatists as Anaxibia; Orestes and Pylades are therefore cousins.

<sup>67</sup> In Aeschylus' *Choëphoroe*, Orestes' resolution weakens for a moment on the appeal of his mother, but he is spurred on by Pylades:

*Clyt.* Stay, O my son! Respect, my child, this maternal breast, whereat thou, heavy with slumber, did'st often, with toothless gums, drain out the life-nourishing milk.

*Orest (turning to Pylades).* Advise me, Pylades; shall respect withhold me? Shall I spare my mother, and not kill her?

*Pyl.* What then becomes of that which remains unfulfilled of Loxias' Pytho-given prophecy? What becomes of the firm

sanction of our mutual oaths? Count all the world thine enemies, but have the Gods for thy friends.

*Orest.* Thou hast prevailed. I am resolved. Thou exhortest me nobly (p. 93, ll. 896-903).

<sup>66</sup> Düntzer justly points out that Iphigenie does not question the necessity of Orest's vengeance; his description of it as 'unerwartet' is therefore hardly apt: 'Daß Orest die Ermordung des Vaters blutig rächen mußte, das steht ihr nach griechischer Anschauung fest. . . . Iphignie wird freilich durch die Kunde von dieser unerwarteten Schreckenstat schaurig angeweht, aber sie fühlt im tiefsten Herzen, daß Orest hier nur des Himmels Willen vollzogen' (pp. 113-6). It would, I think, be more correct to say that the news of the accomplishment of the deed, though expected, inspires in her a momentary feeling of horror. We may note in passing that in Euripides' *Orestes* Electra takes a more active part in the crime, which she admits later to be revolting; she herself relates: 'Accursed mother, who slew her lord, after snaring him in a robe that had no outlet. Her reason a maiden's lips may not declare, and so I leave that unexplained for the world to guess at. What need for me to charge Phoebus with wrong-doing, though he instigated Orestes to slay his own mother, a deed that few approved; still it was his obedience to the god that made him slay her; I, too, feebly as a woman would, shared in the deed of blood, as did Pylades who helped us to bring it about' (pp. 277-8, ll. 24-33). In Sophocles' *Electra*, too, the princess takes a leading part in instigating the act of Orestes. Goethe makes Elektra's 'share' in the crime nothing more than instigation, while Pylades' 'help' is undefined.

<sup>69</sup> In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* this sentiment is stressed:

*Iph.* The wife of the unhappy man, is she still alive?

*Orest.* She lives no more; the son of her body slew her.

*Iph.* O race of grim calamities! What could have led him to do that?

*Orest.* To avenge on her his father's death.

*Iph.* Horror! A deed of justice, but an evil deed. It was rightly done (p. 69, ll. 555-9).

<sup>70</sup> Düntzer regards these lines as a kind of 'Dankgebet': 'Dankt sie auch den Göttern, daß diese sie die letzten Jahre von der Heimat fern gehalten, erkennt darin eine weise Fügung. . . . Sie hat während dieser Zeit selbst eine Art Götterleben geführt. Das reine, ruhige, stille Leben der Götter, die Homer *leichtlebend*, im Gegensatz zu den jammervollen, unglücklichen Sterblichen, nennt, führt der Anfang des Gebetes aus' (pp. 116-7). We can hardly conceive of such smugness on Iphigenie's part; her words

savour more of a reproach of Diana, than an expression of satisfaction, but even this could hardly have been Goethe's intention. Kuno Fischer unjustly finds that the words betray momentary doubt: 'Orest hat den Vater durch den Muttermord gerächt. Es scheint, daß sie nach dem Willen der Götter nicht ihr Haus entsühnen, sondern nur die Ernte der verjüngten Drachensaat erleben soll. . . . Dieser Zweifel ist nur ein flüchtiger Schatten, der einen Augenblick lang ihre Seele trübt' (pp. 35-6).

<sup>71</sup> Euripides' *Orestes*, too, experiences pangs of conscience. In the *Orestes* Menelaus asks: 'What ails thee? what is thy deadly sickness?' to which Orestes replies: 'My conscience; I know that I am guilty of a deadly crime' (p. 289, ll. 395-6).

<sup>72</sup> In Aeschylus' *Eumenides* Orestes, in his defence, reveals to his judges how Apollo had warned him of the terrible consequences, should he neglect to avenge his father: 'I returned home and slew my mother—I will not deny it—in bloody recompense for a sire so dear to me. And to this act Apollo, too, was accessory: who proclaimed that I should have sorrows to goad my heart with remorse, should I not do thus to those who were the authors of that guilt' (pp. 120-1, ll. 462-7). Also in the *Choëphorae* Orestes gives Electra a long account of 'the troubles that would vex my living soul', should he fail to carry out the God's bidding. Again in the murder scene Orestes seems to fear the persecution of his father's Furies more than his mother's:

*Clyt.* Child, I see that thou wilt destroy thy mother.

*Orest.* It is not I, but thou that wilt destroy thyself.

*Clyt.* Look to it! Beware of thy mother's avenging Furies!

*Orest.* But how shall I escape my father's Furies, if I neglect this act? . . . It is my father's doom that decides the question of thy death (pp. 94-5, ll. 922-7).

In Euripides' *Orestes*, too, Orestes declares: 'Suppose I had by my silence consented to my mother's conduct, what would the murdered man have done to me? Would he not now for very hate be tormenting me with avenging fiends? or are there goddesses to help my mother, and are there none to aid him in his deeper wrong?' (p. 296, ll. 580-4).

<sup>73</sup> In Euripides' *Orestes*, Orestes stresses the neglect of Clytemnestra to inflict punishment on herself. 'When her sin had found her out, she wreaked no punishment on herself, but, to avoid the vengeance of her lord, visited her sins on my father and slew him' (p. 296, ll. 576-8).

<sup>74</sup> Düntzer supposes that, between Acts II and III, Pylades had mooted a plan to Orest for the escape of the three Greeks: 'Der Freund hatte ihm in seiner dramatisch nicht ausgeführten

letzten Unterredung den Plan mitgeteilt, die Priesterin mit zur Flucht zu bestimmen; hier rückt er unwillkürlich damit hervor, indem er sich selbst preisgeben will, wodurch die Sache viel leichter ins Werk gerichtet werden könne' (p. 119). Schlosser, too, regards Orest as in league with Pylades, but as unable to continue the deception: 'Sie erfährt die gräßliche Tat, die Orest, das 'holde Kind', an der Mutter vollbracht. Und der ihr das erzählt, der Fremdling, er ist es selbst, Orest, der Bruder, der Muttermörder! Er konnte nicht länger sich verstellen. Was soll er damit gewinnen?' (p. 21). On the contrary, I regard Orest's question: 'Was wähnst du gleichen Fall?' (l. 1073) and his apparent condemnation of 'List' (ll. 1076-80) as revealing bewilderment and disapproval; and he therefore proceeds at once to inform the priestess of the true facts. Had Iphigenie asked him about his identity and had he refused to reveal it, we might have had perhaps some slight grounds for suspecting him of being an accessory in Pylades' deception; but this is not the case. It was, in fact, Iphigenie who refused to reveal hers.

<sup>75</sup> In Euripides' *Orestes* the tortured matricide replies to Menelaus' question: 'What phantom forms afflict thee thus?' with the words: 'Three maidens black as night I seem to see' (p. 290, ll. 407-8).

<sup>76</sup> Kuno Fischer, to whom I am here indebted, writes: 'Es wäre schlimm um die sittliche Lebensordnung bestellt, wenn sie nicht wären, diese Dämonen des menschlichen Schuldbewußtseins, diese Hölle des Gewissens, unmythologisch zu reden. Dann gäbe es nur Schuld ohne Schuldgefühl, Freveltaten ohne Gewissen, nur Zerrüttung ohne Wiederherstellung und Heilung. Die Schuld ist der Übel größtes, nicht die Furien! Diese können und sollen dem Menschen nicht zum Verderben, sondern zum Heile, nicht zur Verheerung, sondern zum Segen gereichen. . . . Sie seien nicht wutentbrannt, sondern wohlgesinnt und wohltuend: mit einem Wort nicht Erinnyen, sondern Eumeniden! . . . In unserer Dichtung ist es Iphigenie, welche die Erinnyen des Bruders besänftigt und in Eumeniden verwandelt' (p. 42).

<sup>77</sup> According to Düntzer, Iphigenie's question: 'Hast du Elektren, *eine* Schwester nur?' (l. 1144), only emphasizes in Orest's mind the contrast between Iphigenie's happier fate and his awful plight: 'Ihre näher führende Frage, ob er bloß *eine* Schwester habe, Elektra, deren er selbst früher gedacht hatte, regt ihn gewaltig auf, da die Erinnerung an die älteste Schwester ihm das schreckliche Unglück, welches diese traf, noch als beneidenswert gegen sein eigenes Wehe erscheinen läßt' (p. 124).

<sup>78</sup> Düntzer rightly opposes Schröder's view that the *timbre* of



Iphigenie's voice reminds him of his mother's: 'Seltsam meint Schröder, der Klang von Iphigeniens Stimme erinnere ihn an die der Mutter. Goethe denkt nur an eine geheime Gewalt, die ihn zur Schwester zieht, da ihr Herz so mächtig zu ihm spricht' (p. 126). Goethe, in fact, is careful to avoid any reference to physical resemblances; any likeness might well have had disastrous consequences for his plot, for it was necessary not only that brother and sister should converse unknown to each other, but also that later Orest should be sceptical about their relationship.

<sup>79</sup> Bittmann, wrongly I think, takes the 'fremder Mann' to be Thoas: 'Von Thoas entfernt Iphigenie jetzt ein Schauer' (p. 163).

<sup>80</sup> In the fable the Greeks knew that Iphigenie was saved by the Goddess (though not in the form which Aeschylus followed in *Agamemnon*—there Iphigenia is slain). In Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the Messenger relates: 'Suddenly behold a miracle—the blow was seen, the stroke was heard; but where the maiden was, none could say. . . . Panting on the ground was a hind of largest size and excelling form. Its spouting blood stained the altar of the Goddess. At this Calchas exclaimed with joy: "O chieftains of the assembled armies of Achaia, behold this victim. The Goddess herself has brought and laid before her altar a mountain hind. In lieu of the maiden, she accepts this"' (p. 49, ll. 1581-3, 1587-94). Goethe makes no mention of the substitution of the hind, and we are not told whether the Greeks in his version were aware of Iphigenie's salvation or not. Naturally, Iphigenie in her narrative (ll. 419-29) ignores the point—she could not possibly know. May we not therefore assume that Goethe ignored the substitution theme—thus indicating that the Greeks believed her to be dead—in order to lend more weight to this revelation? Its effect on Orest would thus be all the greater. In passing, we may note a slight inconsistency in Euripides. In her first prayer to Artemis Iphigenia says: 'I am far away from my country and am thought dead myself, a sacrifice for Achaia' (p. 59, ll. 175-7). And Orestes, in his account to the Priestess, obviously believes his sister to be dead (this in spite of the statements of the Messenger and of Calchas, who were eye-witnesses of her removal from the altar):

*Iph.* Did Agamemnon leave in his house another child?

*Orest.* One only, the maiden Electra.

*Iph.* One only! Is there no news of the sacrificed daughter?

*Orest.* None, save that she died and no longer beholds the light of day. . . . She died in an ill cause—that of a foul woman (p. 70, ll. 561-4, 566).

Goethe has chosen the latter of the alternatives offered by Euripides; for if we are not told about the substitution of the hind, we are probably to imagine that the Greeks were ignorant of Iphigenie's salvation by Diana.

<sup>81</sup> Orest obviously conceives of the complete extinction of their race by the deaths of Iphigenie, Elektra and himself: nothing is said of Pylades, who, in the fable, was their cousin. Goethe makes only a passing reference to this relationship (ll. 1010-1); elsewhere Pylades is merely spoken of as Orest's friend. In his vision of the underworld Orest believes that Pylades, too, has descended; the last link with earth and the curse is thus gone. This latter incident is of no special importance—Goethe was not playing for safety—for it is probable that Orest would not consider Pylades, who was a descendant of Tantalus on his mother's side, a true Tantalid. Thus it is possible, according to his way of thinking, for the race to die out without Pylades' death.

<sup>82</sup> Bittmann explains these lines thus: 'Er berief der Mutter unwill'gen Geist, der Iphigeniens Gesichtszüge angenommen hatte' (p. 172).

<sup>83</sup> I cannot agree with Düntzer's view: 'Iphigeniens mit herzlichstem Mitleid erfülltes Auge erinnert den Schuldbewußten an den ängstlich liebevollen Blick der Mutter, als er erbarmungslos den Dolch gegen sie schwang' (p. 131). Klytämnestra's 'Blick' might have been 'ängstlich', but it would hardly be 'liebevoll', and Orest was not 'erbarmungslos'; indeed, he almost failed. Steinweg's interpretation seems to me the true one: 'Vom tiefsten Jammer erfüllt steht Iphigenie weinend, aber wie Klytämnestras Blick Erbarmen flehend das Herz des Mörders suchte, so trifft ihn der erbarmungsvolle Blick der Schwester' (p. 21).

<sup>84</sup> Bittmann writes: 'Orest sah in Iphigenien die von der Gottheit ihm bestimmte Schlächterin' (p. 171); and Steinweg: 'Sie steht im Dienst der Göttin, und nicht in dem des Fluches, wie er' (p. 21). I hardly think Orest here distinguishes between the will of the Gods and the machinations of the curse; as the curse compelled him to commit his crime, so it now exacts vengeance, and it only exists, in his view, by the will of the Gods. Goethe's Iphigenie, too, is forced to the conclusion that the curse exists by the will of the Gods (Act I, Scene iii), though, paradoxically, elsewhere in the play the contrast and antagonism between the two are emphasized.

<sup>85</sup> We find a similar Scene in Euripides' *Orestes*, in which Electra weeps and Orestes tries to comfort her and blames Apollo (p. 286, ll. 280 seq.).

<sup>86</sup> A change of some importance is to be noted in the duties of the officiating priestess in Goethe's work. Euripides' Iphigenia states: 'My lot is to consecrate the stranger to death and to behold his blood spurt on the altar as he screams shrilly' (p. 60). Again: 'Mine is the duty of preparing the victim; to other hands the slaughter of the sacrifice' (p. 56; l. 40). She describes these preparations: 'Priestess, I sprinkled those yellow tresses as those of one doomed to die on the altar of Artemis. . . . They whom I anoint, are doomed to die' (p. 56; ll. 53-5, 58). By investing the whole ceremony, including the slaughter of the victim, in the hands of his priestess, Goethe has added a further reason for Iphigenie's horror of it (see Note 33 above); while for Orest it takes on the character, not of a sacrifice on the altar or even a just punishment for his sins, but a further atrocity—and the greatest of all—committed under the spell of the curse.

<sup>87</sup> Schrempf denies the existence of the idea of forgiveness: 'Indem er ermattet niedersinkt, tritt ihm die ganze furchtbare Geschichte seines Geschlechts und auch die eigene Tat in ein neues Licht. Er glaubt sich in der Unterwelt, und sieht dort Vater und Mutter und alle die Ahnen, die sich einst wütend bekämpft, in traulichem Gespräch. Es hat sich ihnen also als ein Nichts erwiesen, was sie entzweit, was sie sich gegenseitig angetan. Es ist also auch nichts, daß er die ihn um Erbarmen flehende Mutter gemordet: er darf zu ihr treten, als wäre nichts geschehen. Unter dem Eindruck dieses Gesichts vermag er sich der wiedergefundenen Schwester nun wirklich zu freuen; er versteht nun der Götter Rat, die sie ihm in heiliger Stille zum Segen bewahrt haben; er kann wieder an das Leben glauben, auf seine Rettung denken' (p. 344). Not even the Tantalids could regard their atrocities as '*ein Nichts*', least of all Orest. What they do discover is that the curse has no place in the underworld and that the animosities of earth are done with. Orest's impression is one of complete reconciliation, the gravest of crimes can be forgiven, and it is this thought, not the idea that crimes do not matter, that inspires him with new hope. The reconciliation and forgiveness, which were implanted in his mind by Iphigenie, were part of '*der Götter Rat*', when they brought her to Tauris.

<sup>88</sup> Düntzer imagines that at the end of Scene iii, after realizing the unhappy fate of Tantalus, Orest again collapses: 'Irrig hat man behauptet; durch diese aus der Sage geschöpfte Erinnerung an Tantalus, die nicht, wie die vorhergehenden Vorstellungen, auf reiner Vision beruhe, werde Orest von dem Kreise chimärischer Gebilde in die Wirklichkeit übergeleitet: dieser fällt in Folge der Aufregung über das Wehe des Tantalus in einen

bewußtlosen Zustand zurück, woraus er sich erst, nachdem Iphigenie und Pylades ihm zur Seite getreten, wieder erhebt—und noch immer glaubt er sich in der Unterwelt. Die nötige szenarische Bemerkung fehlt am Schlusse des Auftritts und am Anfang des folgenden' (p. 136). Neither Düntzer's theory nor the one he opposes seems to me to be necessary. The action is simple: At the end of Scene i Orest falls into a short swoon or 'Ermattung'; partially recovering, he narrates his vision of the underworld and his narrative constitutes Scene ii; Scene iii, which still finds Orest in a trance, is made necessary merely by the entry of Iphigenie and Pylades, who in time succeed in bringing him round. I cannot see, therefore, that Goethe has neglected to give any necessary stage directions.

<sup>89</sup> Goethe ignores the third daughter, mentioned in some Greek versions, thus obtaining greater concentration and emphasis. In Euripides' *Orestes* Electra says: 'King Agamemnon took Clytemnestra to wife, name of note in Hellas, and we three daughters were his issue, Chrysothemis, Iphigenia, and myself, Electra; also a son, Orestes; all of that one accursed mother' (p. 277; ll. 20-3).

<sup>90</sup> Düntzer stresses only the former object: 'Orest durch der Schwester inbrünstiges Gebet und den lebhaften Hinweis des Pylades auf die Wirklichkeit zum vollen Bewußtsein zurückgebracht, fühlt sich von aller drückenden Schuld frei' (p. 136). Steinweg recognizes both: 'Noch weilt des Bruders Geist nicht vollständig im Lichte des Tages, zu dem ihn erst Iphigeniens Gebet wachruft' (p. 35); and again: 'Wie sie mit ihm (Pylades) zurückkehrt, in Erwartung grauenvollen Anblicks, da ist ihr Gebet erhört worden: die Furien haben vom Bruder abgelassen' (p. 21). There is, of course, a mistake in the last statement regarding the order of events.

<sup>91</sup> In *Iphigenia in Tauris* Euripides' Iphigenia draws the analogy of brother and sister even more explicitly. The Guard, who reports to the King the attempted flight of the Greeks, relates: 'The daughter of Agamemnon rose up and prayed: "O daughter of Latona, convey me, I pray Thee, Thy priestess, in safety back to Hellas from this barbarian land, and grant us grace of our thefts. Even as Thou lovest Thy brother, O Goddess, so I do love mine"' (p. 96; ll. 1397-1402). It may be noted, too, that both prayers are for assistance in their escape: the Greek Iphigenia prays for help in the storm, so that they and the image may return safely to Argos; Goethe's Iphigenie prays that Orest may be restored to sanity quickly, so that the opportunity for flight may not be lost.

<sup>92</sup> The fear that the Goddess, by denying her help, might allow the intentions of Apollo to be thwarted, which is only implied in Goethe's work, is definitely stated by Euripides' Iphigenia: 'Artemis, revered virgin, who didst save me in the grove of Aulis from the hand of my father, save me now, and save these men too; let not the lips of Apollo, Thy brother, be made false through Thee' (p. 86; ll. 1082-85).

<sup>93</sup> The change from Furies, as they are conceived by Orest before his vision, to 'Eumeniden', is reminiscent of the conclusion of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, where the Erinyes are won over by the Goddess Athena and become benevolent beings. They even pray finally that the citizens may experience 'no more civic strife or retributive disasters'—a piece of political propaganda, no doubt, but one which, in Goethe's play, is realized on a higher spiritual plane in Orest's vision of the underworld (p. 138; ll. 977, 982). The Eumenides even add: 'May they (the citizens), with thoughts of universal love, reciprocate delights. . . . Farewell, enjoy your rich and happy destiny' (p. 139; ll. 984, 996). They then depart (led by Athena herself) to their future subterranean dwelling-place, just as, in Goethe's play, they withdraw to Tartarus.

<sup>94</sup> The quotations are from *The Life and Work of Goethe*, pp. 117-9.

## NOTES TO ACT IV

<sup>95</sup> E. M. Butler fails to find any conflict in Act IV: 'Iphigenia's conflict is no conflict at all, merely a series of beautiful monologues, revealing the purity of her soul' (*The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, Cambridge, 1935, p. 103).

<sup>96</sup> Much has been made by some critics of Pylades' 'Seelenruhe', as opposed to Iphigenie's present lack of it. Düntzer remarks that it is the 'Urquell der Weisheit, welche guten Rat ersinnt' (p. 142); and Bittmann suggest that it springs from his 'seelischer Einklang mit der Gottheit, durch Bewahrung der Klugheit, die auf jenen Willen droben achtend lauscht' (p. 190). I doubt whether Pylades' 'Seelenruhe' is the source of his so-called 'Weisheit', and I certainly would question his possessing any 'Einklang mit der Gottheit'. The true explanation, it seems to me, is that serenity of mind is incompatible with tragedy or conflict, and Iphigenie admires in him what she at the moment most misses in herself; he, on the other hand, knows no scruples,

he is confident of success, and consequently experiences no tumult of mind or soul. There is perhaps also the underlying consciousness in Iphigenie of the traditional weakness of the woman, which is more definitely stated in her line: 'O, trüg' ich doch ein männlich Herz in mir!' (l. 1677). It is, curiously enough, expressed more than once in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* by Clytemnestra, who seems emphatically to possess strength and poise.

<sup>97</sup> Düntzer aptly remarks: 'Aus den gewöhnlichen, sehr glücklich gehobenen Redensart: "Lügen schmieden", entwickelt sich hier das schöne Bild, daß die Lüge nicht den verletzt, gegen den sie gerichtet ist, sondern den, der sich ihrer bedient, da sie seine eigene Brust verwundet, wobei der Dichter sich der alten, schon homerischen Vorstellung bedient, daß Götter abgeschossenen Pfeilen eine andere Richtung geben' (p. 142).

<sup>98</sup> Bittmann, on the other hand, believes that Iphigenie suddenly thinks of Thoas as 'a noble man' now and consequently recoils: 'So lange sie in ihrem Freudenrausch bloß an den Bruder und dessen Freund dachte, mochte sie deren Vorhaben immerhin zustimmen; in dem Augenblick jedoch, wo sie des Königs als eines "edlen Mannes" wieder gedenkt . . . mußte sie auch ausrufen: "Weh' der Lüge!"' (p. 191).

<sup>99</sup> The contrast between Goethe's Iphigenie and Euripides' Iphigenia, who evolves the plan for escape and for the theft of the image, is fully apparent in these lines.

<sup>100</sup> The plan itself, as set forth by Euripides' Iphigenia, has been taken over by Goethe with considerable fidelity, as the following extract will show:

*Iph.* I think I have found a feasible plan. . . . I will declare you to be a matricide from Argos.

*Orest.* Say what you will if it accomplish our escape.

*Iph.* I shall declare that it is not lawful to offer you to the Goddess.

*Orest.* Why? Ah, I see your intention.

*Iph.* Because you are unclean. I may sacrifice only that which is clean.

*Orest.* How will that help us to gain the image of the Goddess?

*Iph.* I shall assert that the sea alone can cleanse you.

*Orest.* Nevertheless, we shall not have obtained the statue for which we sailed from Argos.

*Iph.* That will require cleansing too, for we shall claim that you have touched it with polluting hands.

*Orest.* Where shall we go for the purification? To some near inlet of the sea?

*Iph.* To where your ship is moored with stout ropes to the shore.

*Orest.* Who shall carry the image? You, or who else?

*Iph.* I shall, for I alone may touch it.

*Orest.* And Pylades?

*Iph.* He shares your uncleanness.

*Pyl.* Shall we attempt this plan unknown to the King?

*Iph.* I shall beguile him first. We could not get away undetected.

*Orest.* Our ship awaits us. One wild dash with rapid oars and we are safe.

*Iph.* That, brother, will be your affair (pp. 84-5; ll. 1029, 1033-51).

Not only does Euripides' Iphigenia evolve the plan and propose to carry off the image herself, she also descends even to praying publicly to Artemis, in order to lend conviction to her deception: 'Oh heavenly virgin, daughter of Zeus and Latona, if I wash away in the cleansing waters of the sea the guilt from these men, and if we sacrifice where we have been directed to sacrifice, Thou, O Queen, wilt dwell in a pure temple, and fortune will bless us. All that remains to be done I reveal silently to the holy Gods who know all and to Thee, Artemis' (pp. 91-2; ll. 1230-3).

<sup>101</sup> The name Arkas was probably derived from Racine's *Iphigénie en Aulide*, in which it is given to the Herald of Agamemnon. The name also occurs in a work of Crebillon—he is 'un ancien officier d'Agamemnon'—and in Gotter's translation of one of Voltaire's plays. In de la Touche's *Iphigénie en Aulide* the 'officier des gardes de Thoas' is called Arbas. To Morsch's remark that 'der Name Arkas passe weniger an den Hof eines feinen Barbarenfürsten', Düntzer retorts that 'Thoas selbst ist ein echt griechischer Name' (p. 46).

<sup>102</sup> There is little doubt that these two lines echo Goethe's personal view, namely, that the Gods help those who help themselves; but the manner in which man helps himself is not a matter of indifference. Man is justified in leaving the issue to the Gods only after he has exerted his own powers or if those powers are ineffective or insufficient. The idea is one underlying *Faust*, which is summed up to some extent in the lines in Part II:

Wer immer strebend sich bemüht,  
Den können wir erlösen (11936-7).

Also in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, Book I, Ch. 7, we read: 'Von drückenden Pflichten kann uns nur die gewissenhafteste Ausübung befreien, und was gar nicht aufzulösen ist, überlassen wir zuletzt Gott als dem allbedingenden und allbefreienden

Wesen' (I, 24, p. 124). This is very different from Schrempf's interpretation of *Iphigenie*: 'Der Dichter bezeugt uns als objektive Wahrheit des Lebens, daß wir in der Obhut liebender Götter stehen, die besser für uns sorgen, als wir selbst es zu tun vermögen. Wir können also nichts Besseres tun, als daß wir unser Heil ihnen anheimstellen' (p. 345).

<sup>103</sup> I have already pointed out that this Scene is a crisis in Iphigenie's career; I should agree with Steinweg, if such is his contention, that these lines constitute the 'Höhepunkt'; of the Scene, for Iphigenie is made to realize, for the first time, that the issue rests chiefly with her. Steinweg writes: 'Der Blick des geraden Mannes aber dringt durch den Schleier hindurch, in den sie ihr Vorhaben einhüllt und erregt ihr neue Pein. Nicht in der Götter Hand, in den *sie* den Ausgang legen möchte, ruht, seiner Meinung nach, ihre Sache, sondern in ihrer eigenen! Das ist das erregende Moment für den Kampf, dem sie nun entgegen geht, daß *ihr* der Konflikt zugeschoben wird, daß ihr Herz in Gegensatz gebracht wird zum Willen der Götter!' (p. 22). Would it not, perhaps, be more correct to say that the 'Kampf, dem sie nun entgegen geht', does not consist of a clash between her heart and the will of the Gods, but rather of a struggle to accept the dictates of her heart, instead of the oracle, as the true medium of the Gods? For she discovers eventually that her heart and their will are not 'im Gegensatz'. This seems to be implied in the following quotations from Steinweg: 'Er (Arkás) also verweist sie auf sich selbst und zeigt ihr in dem Sturm, der sie erfaßt hat, den sicheren Ankergrund ihres eigenen Herzens' (p. 38); and 'Wenn Arkas auch einen etwas anderen Weg im Sinne hatte als Iphigenie, so ist er doch der Führer zur Erkenntnis ihrer selbst geworden' (p. 54).

<sup>104</sup> Düntzer remarks: 'Arkas bezeichnet die Milde als eine Himmelstochter, wobei ihm Iphigenie selbst als Verkörperung derselben vorschwebt. Die ganze Äußerung ist für einen Scythen zu hoch, freilich nicht für die Art, wie Goethe den Arkas sich denkt' (p. 146). J. Prinzen, on the other hand, rightly dismisses nationality and national characteristics: 'De menschen bij Goethe zijn geen echte Hellenen, geen echte Skythen, eigenlijk ook geen echte menschen. Er is een schoone idee, de triump van de kalokagathia: "Alle menschliche Gebrechen sühnet reine Menschlichkeit"' (*Het Drama in de 18<sup>e</sup> Eeuw in West-Europa, Zutphen*, p. 560).

<sup>105</sup> Bittmann writes regarding these lines: 'Schmerzen? Mußte Arkas' Seele bei diesem Geständnisse nicht aufjubeln?



Iphigenie vermag sich also von Thoas doch nur widerwillig zu trennen? Dann hatte er noch Hoffnung, alles fernere Unheil abwenden zu können; und in diesem Sinne spricht er: "Die Schmerzen sind's die ich zu Hilfe rufe" (p. 201). I am doubtful if Iphigenie's sorrow is caused by the thought of either parting from Thoas or (as Goethe's text might be taken to indicate) of leaving her task undone; at the end of the play she parts easily enough from Thoas, and to her unfinished work of civilization she gives not so much as a passing thought. Her 'Schmerzen', to my mind, are merely those of a kindhearted woman who finds herself unable to accede to the wishes of a friend and whose task of refusing is made more painful by reiterated appeals.

<sup>100</sup> Düntzer takes 'das Unmögliche' as meaning only 'a return to Greece', which, as he rightly observes, is more precisely indicated in Iphigenie's next lines: 'Das Unmögliche kann nur ihre Rettung durch den Bruder sein, die früher unerreichbar schien, während sie diese plötzlich in nächster Nähe zu sehen glaubte. . . . Das Unmögliche wird darauf näher als ein Wunder ausgeführt: "Es schien sich eine Wolke, u.s.w."' (p. 148). It should, however, also be noted that, in her subsequent lines, Iphigenie reverts to her brother. The two, her return home and her brother, are, it seems to me, closely linked in her mind. In the first version Goethe used the word 'das Unglaubliche'. It looks as if he had tried, though not too successfully, to sum up in a word a passage in which Euripides' Iphigenia describes her emotions at length: 'Brother . . . I am fortunate beyond words. What shall I say? What has befallen is beyond wonder and reason . . . (To the Chorus) What delight is mine, dear friends! I fear lest he slip from my hands and escape into the air, vanishing into the sky. O home, O hearth which the Cyclops built, O Mycenae, dear country, I thank you for this, my brother's life. I thank you for his youth and upbringing, that he now stands here, the light of our race' (p. 78; ll. 839, 842-9).

<sup>107</sup> These lines have been much discussed. Düntzer, in my opinion, gives the true meaning of 'nur' in l. 1519—as opposed to Hülskamp, who links it up with 'vorwärts'—when he remarks: "'Nur" bezieht sich auf "sie zu retten"' (p. 149). H. P. Cotterill, disagreeing with Denzel's remark: "'Nur" ist nicht auf "sie" zu beziehen', says: 'There is not much difference between "my soul was only bent on saving them", and "was bent on saving them alone"' (p. 127). The real meaning is: 'My soul was bent only on saving them', i.e., on my task of saving them. Likewise the 'nur' in l. 1518 refers to the whole predicate of 'horchte', namely, 'auf seines Freundes Rat'. Cotterill

further suggests that Iphigenie's words, 'nur sie zu retten', show that it was not merely her own escape from Tauris that 'filled her mind'. Nevertheless, her own release is of vital importance to her; her next lines say so, and the play begins with a prayer for it and ends with its fulfilment. It is part of 'das Unmögliche' of l. 1510. Iphigenie's concern at the moment, however, is not to explain whose escape is uppermost in her mind, but to excuse an action which she condemns.

<sup>108</sup> The text of the first prose version runs:

*Iph.* Welche Nachricht von meinem Bruder?

*Pyl.* Die beste und schönste. Von hier begleitet' ich ihn, gesteh' ich, mit inniger Sorge. Denn ich traute den Unterirdischen nicht, und fürchtete auf des Gestades ungeweihtem Boden ihren Hinterhalt. Aber Orest ging, die Seele frei, wie ich ihn nie gesehn, immer unsrer Errettung nachdenkend, vorwärts und bemerkte nicht, daß er aus des heiligen Haines Grenzen sich entfernte. . . . Kaum daß ich dem Notwendigen nachdachte, so fröhlich war ich, in ihm das schöne Feuer der Jugend auflodern zu sehen, und ihn zu sehn mit freiem Geiste kühnen Taten nachdenken' (I, 39, pp. 379-80).

<sup>109</sup> Orest now bears some resemblance to Euripides' Orestes. The Guard relates: 'The man Orestes picked her (Iphigenia) up, placed her on his left shoulder, and, wading through the sea, carried her to the ladder. He leaped aboard the well-oared ship, bearing with him his sister and the image of Artemis, which fell from heaven (p. 96; ll. 1381-5).

<sup>110</sup> The first prose version runs:

*Iph.* Was habt ihr beschlossen?

*Pyl.* Auf dem Vorgebirge zündet er ein Feuer an, das Zeichen unsern lang harrenden Freunden zur See.

*Iph.* Wenn sie nicht aufmerken oder vorüber gefahren sind?

*Pyl.* Dann wäre neue Sorge. Jetzt ist nur diese. Und wenn sie's merken und landen in der bestimmten Bucht, kommt er zurück und holt uns ab; wir nehmen still das Bild der Göttin mit, und stechen rudernd nach der vielgeliebten Küste! (I, 39, p. 380).

It must strike us as a definite weakness in the first version that Iphigenie was not more fully informed and that she should still show such a lively interest in a plan which had become obnoxious.

<sup>111</sup> In the first prose version Pylades blames both Iphigenie and himself: 'Warum verließ ich dich? Du warst nicht gegenwärtig genug, dem Unerwarteten durch gewandte List zu ent-

gehn. . . . Warum hab' ich dir nicht die tiefsten Wendungen von unsrer List erklärt?' (I, 39, p. 381).

<sup>112</sup> Iphigenie's self-accusation is even more directly expressed in the first prose version. To Pylades' remark: 'Zage nicht! Nur in der Furcht ist die Gefahr', she replies: 'Nicht Furcht, ein edles Gefühl macht mir bange. Den König, der mich gastfreundlich aufnahm, beraub' ich und betrüg' ich' (I, 39, p. 382).

<sup>113</sup> Düntzer disagrees with F. Schultz' interpretation of the line (*Zeitschrift für das Gymnasialwesen*, 1899, pp. 81-7), which is: 'Stellt sich dein Gefühl auf die rechte (menschliche) Stufe, so mußt du dich für rein halten und darfst dir wegen der Täuschung, welche die Not gebietet, die Selbstachtung nicht versagen'. Düntzer's interpretation is as follows: 'Pylades erinnert sie an den hohen Wert ihrer reinen Natur, wobei er denkt, daß ein so hohes Wesen sich nicht einem Barbarenkönig opfern dürfe. . . . Ihm sei deshalb das rechte Fühlen, daß sie sich weder zu niedrig (dem Barbaren und Brudermörder gleich) noch zu hoch (den Göttern gleich) halte, sondern sich auf die menschliche Stufe stelle'. And he translates the line: 'Hast du das volle Bewußtsein deines Wesens . . . ' (p. 154).

<sup>114</sup> The eight lines (ll. 1645-52) show considerable expansion on the corresponding lines in the first version, a fact which shows the importance Goethe attached later to this idea of 'feeling' and 'heart'. The lines in the first version run:

*Pyl.* Das ist nicht Undank, was die Not heischt.

*Iph.* Es bleibt wohl Undank, nur die Not entschuldigt's.

*Pyl.* Die gültigste Entschuldigung hast du.

*Iph.* Vor andern wohl, doch mich beruhiget sie nicht. Ganz unbefleckt ist nur die Seele ruhig (I, 39, p. 383).

<sup>115</sup> This theme, the unhappy consequences for the idealist of the clash between idealism and reality, is more fully worked out in the Philemon and Baucis episode in *Faust II*, Act V.

<sup>116</sup> A. Bielschowsky, *Goethe*, München, 1922, pp. 436-7; 1928, pp. 431-2.

<sup>117</sup> Carl Fries, *Parzenlied und Völuspá*, GJB., 1912, pp. 86-7.

<sup>118</sup> F. Gundolf, *Goethe*, Berlin, 1922, p. 312-5.

<sup>119</sup> H. Bulthaupt, *Dramaturgie des Schauspiels*, Oldenburg und Leipzig, 1893, Vol. I, p. 141.

<sup>120</sup> H. Düntzer, *Goethe's Iphigenie auf Tauris, erläutert*, Leipzig, 1899, pp. 159-62.

<sup>121</sup> W. Bittmann, *Eine Studie über Goethes 'Iphigenie auf Tauris'*, Wien, 1986, pp. 221-2.

<sup>122</sup> Kuno Fischer, *Goethes 'Iphigenie'*, Heidelberg, p. 23.

<sup>123</sup> G. Schlosser, *Goethes 'Iphigenie' nach ihrem religiös-sittlichen Gehalt*, Frankfurt, 1875, p. 26.

<sup>124</sup> Herman Grimm, *Fragmente, Goethes 'Iphigenie'*, Berlin, 1900, p. 81.

<sup>125</sup> C. Steinweg, *Goethes Seelendramen und ihre französischen Vorlagen*, Halle, pp. 14 and 31.

<sup>126</sup> Ch. Schrempf, *Goethes Lebensanschauung in ihrer geschichtlichen Gestalt*, Stuttgart, 1932, pp. 343 ff.

<sup>127</sup> J. G. Robertson, *Goethe*, London, 1932, pp. 124 ff.

<sup>128</sup> Barker Fairley, *Goethe as revealed in his Poetry*, London, 1932, p. 28.

<sup>129</sup> E. M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, Cambridge, 1925, p. 102.

## NOTES TO ACT V

<sup>130</sup> Düntzer regards these two questions as alternatives: 'Arkas meint, entweder suchten die Gefangenen selbst die Opferung aufzuschieben, oder die Priesterin sei mit ihnen im Bunde' (p. 163). They are, as a matter of fact, complementary.

<sup>131</sup> Bittmann sees in Arkas' speech a suggestion that Iphigenie had been deceived: 'So beschuldigt Arkas zuerst die Gefangenen eines möglichen Betrugs der Priesterin durch Simulierung des Wahnsinns bei einem derselben' (pp. 226-7). This is not so. What he says is that both the 'Wahnsinn' and the purification ceremony give rise to suspicion; in other words, both Iphigenie and the strangers appear to be deceiving. It is Thoas, in Scene iii, who credits Iphigenie with herself being deceived.

<sup>132</sup> Steinweg remarks: 'Seine Menschlichkeit reut ihn und zwingt ihn Betrachtungen anzustellen über seine und seiner Vorfahren "rohe" Sitten' (p. 44). Thoas, be it noted, speaks only of the 'rohe Hand meiner Ahnherrn', which he contrasts with his own. Bittmann sees in the lines a kind of smug satisfaction or feeling of superiority: 'Thoas gedenkt der rohen Hand seiner Ahnherrn mit Befriedigung, als eines Anlasses, sich selbst emporheben zu können' (p. 228). On the contrary, he feels at the moment inferior to his ancestors, less wise, and his policy less successful.

<sup>133</sup> See the discussion of quotations from Fischer, Schlosser and Grimm, pp. 120-1 above.

<sup>184</sup> Steinweg writes: 'Der Götter Haß wird also fort dauern, der Fluch weiter walten! Hiermit ist der Tiefpunkt des psychologischen Dramas erreicht. In dieser Stimmung tritt Iphigenie dem König gegenüber. . . Im Hin und Wieder von Befehl und Rechtfertigung strauchelt sie und dadurch wird die bevorstehende Peripetie eingeleitet. . . Noch ein kurzer Versuch, sich stark zu machen gegen ihre innere Stimme, und der Mut zur Wahrheit ist gefunden' (pp. 24-5). Düntzer seems to think that Iphigenie is stung into confessing by Thoas' accusation: 'Nach des Königs Andeutung, sie hoffe wohl durch sie (die Fremden) zur Heimat zurückzukehren, hält sie sich nicht länger, sie fühlt, daß sie diesen nicht betrügen dürfe, daß sie ihm die volle Wahrheit schuldig sei. . . Ihre Erbitterung gegen die Götter, die sie in gräßlichen Zwiespalt mit sich selbst geführt, ist geschwunden, sie fühlt, daß es für sie als Frau nur einen Weg, den der Wahrheit, gebe, und diesen schlägt sie getrost ein, überzeugt, daß die Götter sie aus aller Bedrängnis retten werden' (pp. 169-71). There is nothing 'getrost' about Iphigenie, when she decides to take the plunge, for she is by no means sure, though she certainly hopes, that through her the Gods 'will glorify truth'.

<sup>185</sup> See the quotations from Bielschowsky, Fries and Gundolf, pp. 118-9 above.

<sup>186</sup> These lines are obviously addressed to the Gods, not to Thoas, as I erroneously suggested in my article, *Four Prayers in Goethe's 'Iphigenie'* (*German Studies*, Oxford, 1939, p. 57). She turns to Thoas only with her next line: 'Ja, vernimm, o König . . .' (l. 1919). Düntzer justly remarks: 'Wenn auf der weimarischen Bühne in späterer Zeit Iphigenie diese Worte an Thoas richtete, so war dies ein arger Verstoß' (p. 171). A point which may be noted is that throughout the play Iphigenie addresses the Gods in the second person plural, 'Ihr', Thoas and Diana in the singular, 'Du'.

<sup>187</sup> Düntzer is worried about Iphigenie's remark that she and Orest are the last survivors of their race: 'Auch hier wird von Elektra ganz abgesehen. Solche Ungenauigkeiten pflegen der leidenschaftlichen Erregtheit zu entschlüpfen, und der Dichter bedarf ihrer' (p. 172). No doubt it may be regarded as a natural result of her agitation, especially as she has just been discussing the fate of the two 'Überlebene' who matter—the two with a mission to perform. She does mention Elektra later (l. 2089), but then only as a kind of adjunct to Orest.

<sup>188</sup> Düntzer, I think, reads too much into these lines. He states: 'Der in Thoas wühlende Grimm, daß sie ihn, den Barbaren, verwerfe und der bessern Heimat zustrebe, bricht in der bitteren

Hindeutung auf Atreus aus, den Griechen, der ja die Stimme der Menschheit nicht gehört: doch Iphigenie ist über jede Verachtung der Barbaren erhaben, wenn sie auch sich zum Vaterlande mit mächtigen Banden hingezogen fühlt' (p. 172).

<sup>130</sup> It is perhaps permissible to take 'des Lebens Quelle' not merely as meaning 'pure feeling', but also as 'the fountain-head of all life and feeling', namely, God, or in this case the Gods. Commenting on Faust's lines:

Man sehnt sich nach des Lebens Bächen,  
Ach! nach des Lebens Quelle hin (1200-1),

where it is not a question of emotion, but of knowledge and truth, Calvin Thomas points to the biblical imagery in the lines, and quotes, among others, Ps. xxxvi, 9: 'For with thee is the fountain of life' (*Goethe's 'Faust'*, Heath, New York, 1912, p. 280). So, too, Iphigenie's 'Lebens Quelle' may well be the *fountain-head* of pure feeling and emotion. The point of Iphigenie's speech is simply that this pure fountain of life may flow in the heart of any human being whatsoever.

<sup>140</sup> In the *Electra* of Sophocles Electra says: 'Thou wert never thy mother's darling so much as mine; nor was any in the house thy nurse but I; and by thee I was ever called sister' (ll. 1145-8). In his *Electra* (ll. 573 ff.) Euripides gives the full story of the scar, which Goethe has altered slightly.

<sup>141</sup> Düntzer writes regarding these lines: 'Er (Thoas) räumt nach der Weise äußerlich ungern nachgebender Menschen noch nicht entschieden ein, daß seine Zweifel gehoben und sein Zorn gegen Iphigenien geschwunden, obgleich letzteres schon am Schlusse des dritten Auftritts geschehen war' (p. 180). There are, of course, distinct signs of Thoas' relenting at the close of Scene iii, and he may even have suppressed his wrath altogether (l. 1986), but he does not seem to react on Iphigenie's invitation to shake hands (l. 1987). Since then, however, Thoas considers he has further cause for anger (ll. 1998-9). Nevertheless, I agree in the main with Düntzer's interpretation of the lines. But it is not the 'Einräumen' of an 'ungern nachgebender Mensch'. The subjunctives do not imply a possible contingency. The true meaning, to my mind, is: 'Even if your words dispel all my doubts and if I overcome the anger in my heart—and I admit that both of these things are virtually accomplished—nevertheless, there can be no peace between us.' In other words, the attempted theft of the image still remains a barrier.

<sup>142</sup> Düntzer, who regards it as inspiration, is not too happy about the explanation: 'In diesem Augenblick offenbart sich

dem Orest, der die Rückführung der Schwester in so naher Aussicht sieht, der Sinn des Orakels. . . . Diese Erleuchtung wünschte man freilich bezeichnender als durch die Worte: "Jetzt kennen wir den Irrtum", angedeutet' (pp. 180-1). Steinweg is quite definite: 'Der Augenblick ist gekommen, ihnen die Augen zu öffnen: Apoll gibt es dem Schwergeprüften in das Herz, und jetzt erkennt er, daß alles erfüllt ist, was der Gott befohlen hatte' (p. 36).

<sup>143</sup> We have here, no doubt, an echo of Euripides' version, in which the Greeks successfully carry off the image by force and cunning, but are later frustrated by the winds.

<sup>144</sup> With regard to ll. 2128-9 Düntzer remarks: 'Der Dichter denkt an das von Zeus dem Dardanos, dem König von Troja; geschenkte Palladion (Bild der Minerva), woran die Sicherheit Trojas geknüpft war. Das geheime Götterwort deutet nicht auf die Geheimhaltung, sondern auf die geheime (magische) Wirkung' (pp. 181-2).

<sup>145</sup> In reply to Gottfried Hermann's contention that Thoas' 'Lebt wohl!' deeply 'wounds the heart of the listener, and is not in accord with the practice of Greek tragedy or the laws of poetic art', A. S. Wilkins remarks: 'Which of us does not feel that the restrained pathos of the "Lebt wohl!" of the King, who is parting from the very light of his life, would not be infinitely marred, if it were expanded into the dozen or so highly appropriate lines, which Euripides would probably have put into his mouth?' (*Transactions of the Manchester Goethe Society*, 1886-93, pp. 75-6).

